



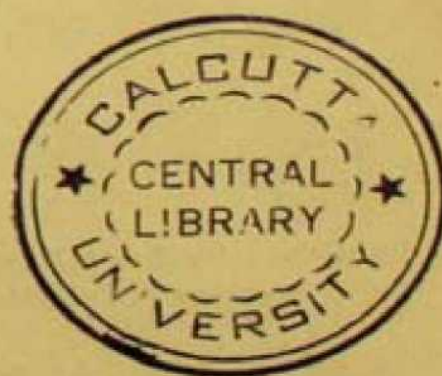
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INDIAN FEUDALISM : c. 300-1200

RAM SHARAN SHARMA



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FOREWORD

Professor R. S. Sharma of the University of Patna was invited to deliver the first course of six lectures and to preside over the first series of two seminars, both organised by the U.G.C. Centre of Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture in December 1964. We are very glad to place Prof. Sharma's lectures in the hands of students interested in the early history of India. The proceedings of the corresponding series of seminars (on Feudalism and Land System of Ancient India) are being published as a separate volume.

It is a pleasure for us to see the lectures printed in such a short time. For this achievement, we are indebted to Prof. Sharma and to the Pooran Press.

Centre of Advanced Study in
Ancient Indian History and Culture,
University of Calcutta
7th August 1965

D. C. SIRCAR
DIRECTOR

PREFACE

The present book is based on a course of six lectures I delivered at the University of Calcutta in 1964 under the auspices of the Centre of Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture at the invitation of its Director, Professor Niharranjan Ray. I am grateful to him and the present Director, Professor D. C. Sircar, who kindly organised these lectures and the discussions that followed them, and expedited the publication of this work. I wish to acknowledge my debt to Professor A. L. Basham, who has gone through the manuscript and pointed out errors, especially in regard to Indian shipping treated in Chapter VI; also to Dr. B. P. Mazumdar, who has read the whole stuff and suggested some references. My thanks are due to Dr. (Mrs.) Suvira Jaiswal and Dr. Dwijendra Narayan Jha for preparing the index, and to Dr. Sita Ram Roy and Mr. Jagannath Mishra for correcting the proofs. Finally, I thank the Pooran Press for their unfailing co-operation.

As far as possible all long Sanskrit words or those joined by the rules of Samdhi have been separated by single hyphens, since double hyphens, desirable in many cases, were not available with the printers. Diacritical marks have not been always used in well-known proper names nor in words of modern Indian languages. Appendix I repeats some matter dealt with in the main body of the book, but has been included here to bring out the peculiarities of the land system in a semi-aboriginal tract.

I am conscious of the difficulties besetting the study of feudalism in the Indian context. But it is a challenge which has to be taken up and a beginning made. Covering a period



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of about nine centuries, my study is intended to be a rough framework within which the problems raised here can be discussed in detail at a later stage. Confined to Northern India, the present work concerns the political and economic aspects of feudalism, and does not consider its impact on social and cultural life. In spite of these limitations I will feel satisfied if the book succeeds in creating some awareness of the subject among serious students of Indian history.

Department of History

PATNA UNIVERSITY

15th August 1965

R. S. SHARMA

ABBREVIATIONS

ARB	<i>Antiquarian Remains in Bihar</i> , D. R. Patil, Patna, 1963
AŚ	<i>Arthaśāstra</i>
ASR	<i>Archæological Survey Reports</i> by A. Cunningham
ASS	<i>Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series</i>
BI	Biblitheca Indica
Br.	<i>Brhaspati Smṛti</i>
CCIM	<i>Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum</i> , Calcutta, i, Oxford, 1906
Cal.	Calcutta Edition of the <i>Mahābhārata</i>
CHI	<i>Cambridge History of India</i> , i, ed. E. J. Rapson, Indian Reprint, Delhi, 1955
CII	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i> , i-iii, London, 1888-1929 ; iv, Ootacamund, 1955
DK	<i>Dharmakośa</i> (in three ptrts), Laxmanshastri Joshi, Wai (Dist. Satara), 1937-1941
DN	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Ed.	Edited by
EI	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i> , Calcutta and Delhi
Gaut. Dh. S.	<i>Gautama Dharmasūtra</i>
GOS	Gaikwad Oriental Series
HC	<i>Harṣacarita</i> of Bāṇabhaṭṭa (Nirṇayasāgara ed.)
HCIP	<i>History and Culture of the Indian People</i> , ed. R. C. Majumdar, Bombay, 1951
HDS	<i>History of Dharmaśāstra</i> , P. V. Kane, Poona

<i>IA</i>	<i>Indian Antiquary, Bombay</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>Inscriptions of Bengal, iii, N. G. Majumdar, Rajshahi, 1929</i>
<i>IHQ</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society, Baltimore</i>
<i>Jāt.</i>	<i>Jātaka</i>
<i>JBBRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay</i>
<i>JBORS</i>	<i>Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna</i>
<i>JBRS</i>	<i>Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Patna</i>
<i>JDL</i>	<i>Journal of Department of Letters, Calcutta University</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Leiden</i>
<i>JIH</i>	<i>Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum</i>
<i>JNSI</i>	<i>Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi (Banaras)</i>
<i>JOR</i>	<i>Journal of Oriental Research, Madras</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London</i>
<i>KNS</i>	<i>Kāmandaka Nītisāra</i>
<i>Kāma S.</i>	<i>Kāmasūtra</i>
<i>Kātyā.</i>	<i>Kātyāyana Smṛti</i>
<i>LP</i>	<i>Lekhapaddhati</i>
<i>Manu</i>	<i>Manu Smṛti</i>
<i>Mārka. P.</i>	<i>Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa</i>
<i>Mbh.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
<i>Nār.</i>	<i>Nārada Smṛti</i>

NS	New Series
PTS	Pali Text Society
SBE	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i> , 50 vols. Ed. F. Max Müller, Oxford, 1879-1900
<i>Sel. Inscr.</i>	<i>Select Inscriptions</i> , i, D. C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1942
ŚP	<i>Śānti Parva</i>
Śūdras	<i>Śūdras in Ancient India</i> , R. S. Sharma, Delhi, 1958
Tr.	Translated by, Translation
Vā. P.	<i>Vāyu Purāṇa</i>
Vas. Dh. S.	<i>Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra</i>
Viṣṇu	<i>Viṣṇu Smṛti</i>
Yāj	<i>Yājñavalkya Smṛti</i>

Besides the journals and reports covered by the abbreviations the following have also been used :
Indo-Asian Culture, New Delhi

Journal of World History (UNESCO Publication)

Journal of the U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow

Madras Report on Epigraphy, Madras

Proceedings of the 24th Session of the Indian History Congress, Delhi, 1961

The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, Calcutta
Summaries of Papers, Indian History Congress,
Silver Jubilee Session, Poona, 1963

CHAPTER I

ORIGINS AND FIRST PHASE

(c. A.D. 300-750)

It is very difficult precisely to define the term feudalism. Just as there are as many definitions of socialism as there are socialists, so also there are as many definitions of feudalism as there are scholars working on the subject. The term is attributed variously to stages of historical development far removed from one another in time and place, such as the interregnum (2475-2160 B.C.) after the Old Kingdom in Egypt and to the Chou period in China (c. 1122-250 B.C.), but generally it is applied to society in Europe from the 5th to the 15th century A.D. Even in the last case some stress the legal aspect of feudalism embodied in the contractual relationship between the lord and the vassal, while others emphasise its economic aspect manifested in the manorial system. To us the European experience suggests that the political essence of feudalism lay in the organisation of the whole administrative structure on the basis of land; its economic essence lay in the institution of serfdom in which peasants were attached to the soil held by landed intermediaries placed between the king and the actual tillers, who had to pay rent in kind and labour to them. The system was based on a self-sufficient economy in which things were mainly produced for the local use of the peasants and their lords and not for market. It is therefore in the light of certain broad features of feudalism in this sense that we will investigate the origins and growth of feudalism in India. From the post-Maurya period, and especially from Gupta times, certain political and administrative developments tended to feudalise the state apparatus.

The most striking development was the practice of making land grants to the brāhmaṇas, a custom which was sanctified by the injunctions laid down in the Dharmaśāstras, the didactic portions of the Epic, and the Purāṇas; the *Anuśāsana Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* devotes a whole chapter to the praise of making gifts of land (*bhūmidāna-praśamsā*). The early Pāli texts of the pre-Maurya period refer to the villages granted to the brāhmaṇas by the rulers of Kosala and Magadha, but they do not mention the abandonment of any administrative rights by the donors. The same is the case with the earliest epigraphic record of a land grant, a Sātavāhana inscription of the 1st century B.C., which refers to the grant of a village as a gift in the *aśvamedha* sacrifice.¹ Surprisingly enough, administrative rights were perhaps given up for the first time in the grants made to Buddhist monks by the Sātavāhana ruler Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi in the 2nd century A.D. The land granted to them could not be entered by royal troops, disturbed by government officials, or interfered with by the district police.² Two significant features of such grants, which became more frequent from the 5th century A.D., were the transfer of all sources of revenue, and the surrender of police and administrative functions. The grants of the 2nd century A.D. mention the transfer of the king's control only over salt, which implies that he retained certain other sources of revenue. But in later grants, from the time of Pravarasena II Vākātaka onwards (5th century A.D.), the ruler gave up his control over almost all sources of revenue, including pasturage, hides and charcoal, mines for the production of salt, forced labour, and all hidden treasures and deposits. The *Raghuvamśa* states that, among other things, mines constitute the wages (*vetana*) of the king for protecting

1 *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 188, l. 11.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 192, 194-5.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 422, ll. 26-29.

the earth.¹ According to some grants of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. the brāhmaṇas were granted the right of enjoying the hidden treasures and deposits of the villages;² this meant the transfer of royal ownership over mines, which was an important sign of the king's sovereignty.

Equally important is the fact that the donor not only abandoned his revenues but also the right to govern the inhabitants of the villages that were granted. The Gupta period furnishes at least half a dozen instances of grants of apparently settled villages made to the brāhmaṇas by the big feudatories in Central India, in which the residents, including the cultivators and artisans, were expressly asked by their respective rulers not only to pay the customary taxes to the donees, but also to obey their commands. In two other land grants of post-Gupta times royal commands were issued to government officials employed as *sarvādhyakṣa* and also to regular soldiers and umbrella-bearers that they should not cause any disturbance to the brāhmaṇas.³ All this provides clear evidence of the surrender of the administrative power of the state.

The inscriptions of the 5th century A.D. show that the ruler generally retained the right to punish thieves, which was one of the main bases of the state power. The process of disintegration reached its logical end when in later times the king made over to the brāhmaṇas not only this right, but also his right to punish all offences against family, property, person etc. In Central and Western India some royal donors conferred upon the grantees the right of trying cases in the donated villages. Their grants use the term *abhyantarāsiddhi*,⁴

1 XVII. 66.

2 *CH*, iii, no. 41, l. 8; *Set. Inscr.*, p. 422, l. 29.

3 R. S. Sharma, "Politico-Legal Aspects of the Caste System", *JBR*, xxxix, 325.

4 *abhyantara-siddhikāh*, *CH*, iv, no. 31, l. 41.

which has been interpreted variously.¹ It makes sense if we take it as adjudication of internal disputes in the village, which is thus made completely self-dependent.² Apparently this technical expression is the counterpart of *sa-daṇḍa-daś-āparādhah* used in north Indian grants. But while the later limits the grantee's jurisdiction to criminal cases,³ the former extends it to civil cases, so that armed with such powers the donees could turn the benefices into practically independent pockets.

Of the seven organs of the state power mentioned in literary and epigraphic sources, taxation system and coercive power based on the army are rightly regarded as two vital elements. If they are abandoned, the state power disintegrates. But this is the position created by the grants made to the brāhmaṇas. The fiefs are usually granted for as long as the existence of the sun and the moon, which implies the permanent break-up of the integrity of the state. The grants to priests can be traced back to pre-Maurya and Maurya times. Kauṭilya recommends grants of land in new settlements according to the *brahmadeya* tenure, which carries freedom from taxes and punishments.⁴ But the position changes in the Gupta period. Commenting on the term *brahmadeyya* in the early Pāli texts, Buddhaghosa, who flourished during the 5th century A. D., states that the *brahmadeyya* grant carries with it judicial administrative rights,⁵ which is corroborated by contemporary epigraphic evidence. This interpretation of the term *brahmadeyya* does not reflect the position in the pre-Maurya period but in the time of the commentator. Thus the widespread practice of making land grants in the Gupta period paved the way for the rise of brāhmaṇa feudatories, who performed

1 *CH*, iv, 154 fn. 1.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *Ibid.*, iii, 189-90, fn. 4.

4 *AS*, II. 1.

5 *PTS Pali-English Dictionary*, sv. *brahmadeyya*.

administrative functions not under the authority of the royal officers but almost independently. (What was implicit in earlier grants became explicit in grants from about A. D. 1000, and was well recognised in the administrative systems of the Turks. Whatever might be the intentions of the donors, the grants helped to create powerful intermediaries wielding considerable economic and political power. As the number of the land-owning brāhmaṇas went on increasing, some of them gradually shed their priestly functions and turned their chief attention to the management of land; in their case secular functions became more important than religious functions. But above all, as a result of land grants made to the brāhmaṇas, the "comprehensive competence based on centralised control", which was the hall-mark of the Maurya state, gave way to decentralisation in the post-Maurya and Gupta periods. The functions of the collection of taxes, levy of forced labour, regulation of mines, agriculture etc., together with those of the maintenance of law and order, and defence, which were hitherto performed by the state officials, were now step by step abandoned, first to the priestly class, and later to the warrior class.

Gupta grants from Bengal and Central India confer the right of enjoying the revenues from land in perpetuity on the grantee, but they do not authorise him to alienate or grant his rents or land to others. Perhaps the earliest record of this type comes from Indore in Central India where an inscription of A.D. 397 records the consent of one *mahārāja* Svāmidāsa, probably a feudatory of the Imperial Guptas, to the grant of a field by a merchant.¹ The fact that Svāmidāsa was empowered to endorse the religious grant made by an individual in his jurisdiction suggests that as a feudatory he himself could make religious grants without royal consent. But

¹ EI, XV, no. 16, 11. 1-9. It is not quite clear whether the merchant was the donor.

neither in this case nor in the case of other Gupta feudatories such as the Parivrājaka and Ucchakalpa, who granted several villages, is there anything to show that they held land of the king. Thus these grants do not illustrate true subinfeudation. However, the Indore grant authorises the grantee to enjoy the field, cultivate it and get it cultivated so long as he observes the conditions of the *brahmadeya* grant.¹ This leaves clear scope for creating tenants on the donated land and provides perhaps the earliest epigraphic evidence of the subinfeudation of the soil. Although examples of this type are not found in other parts of the country, we have here the beginning of the process of subinfeudation which continued in the western part of Central India in the 5th century A.D. and characterised the grants of the Valabhī rulers to their donees in the 6th and 7th centuries.

It is significant that the heart of the Gupta empire which covered the modern states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal hardly knows of any grant of village or land made by any feudatory chief without royal consent, all such grants being confined to the periphery of this area in the outlying regions whose chiefs owed only nominal allegiance to the Imperial Guptas. Only towards the end of the rule of the Imperial Guptas such practices appeared in the kernel of their empire. (The *kumārāmātya-mahārāja* Nandana granted a village in the modern Gaya District in the middle of the 6th century A.D.² although this seemed to have been a royal prerogative of the Imperial Guptas in earlier times.

According to the charters in return for land grants the priests were obliged to render religious services, which might secure the spiritual welfare of the donors or their ancestors. The secular obligations of the priestly beneficiaries are rarely laid down; the only example is the Chammak copper-plate of the Vākāṭaka

¹ *ucitayā brahmadeya-bhuktyā bhuñjataḥ kṛṣataḥ kṛṣāpayataś-caḥ*. Ibid., 11.6-7.

² *JASB*, NS, v (1909), 164 : *El*, x, 12.



king Pravarsena II, which imposes certain obligations on one thousand brāhmaṇas who are granted one village.¹ It lays down that they shall not conspire against the king and the kingdom, commit theft and adultery, slay brāhmaṇas, and poison kings, etc.; further they shall not wage war and do wrong to other villages.² All these are negative obligations, which imply that the priests enjoyed the land on condition that they would not act in opposition to the established social and political system. These were probably taken for granted on the part of the religious beneficiaries in other charters. But it is natural to expect that the brāhmaṇas more than repaid their generous donors and patrons by maintaining law and order in the areas under their charge and impressing upon the people the sacred duty of carrying out their varṇa functions and of obeying the king, who from the Gupta period was represented as embodying in his person the attributes of various gods. Hence whatever may have been the intentions of the donors, it would be wrong to think that these grants served only religious purposes. Certainly the priests prayed for the spiritual well-being of the donors and their ancestors, and never supplied any soldiers as the bishops did in England, but where was the need for military service if the people could be persuaded to behave themselves and to acquiesce in the existing order?

In the Gupta period there is no direct epigraphic evidence of grants made to officers for their military and administrative services, although such a possibility cannot be entirely ruled out. If we go by legal texts it would appear that heads of fiscal and administrative units based on the decimal system were paid by land grants. The decimal system of territorial organisation was first outlined by Kauṭilya, who prescribes units of 800, 400, 200,

1 CII, iii, no. 55.

2 Ibid., 11. 39-43.

10 villages¹ and even of 5 villages, and names the officers as *pañcagrami*, *daśagrami*, *gopa*, *sthānika* and *samāhartā*.² The *samāhartā* is to be paid in cash³ although in the new settlements the *gopa* and the *sthānika* are to be granted land, which they cannot sell or dispose of in any other way.⁴ This apparently is in addition to their regular remuneration in cash, so that this feudal trait in the system of Kauṭilya seems to be very feeble. But this is strengthened in the beginning of the Christian era, as can be inferred from the law-book of Manu. Manu retains the decimal system by providing administrative units of 10, 20, 100, and 1000 villages.⁵ But he modifies the mode of payment materially by enjoining that officers in charge of these units should be paid by grants of land.⁶ This rule presents a sharp contrast to Kauṭilya's provision for payment in cash to practically all grades of officials. The *Manu Smṛti* recommends land grants for remunerating officials who are placed in charge of one, ten, twenty, a hundred or a thousand villages to collect royal dues (*rāja-pradeyāni*) and maintain law and order.⁷ This rule is reproduced in the law-book of Bṛhaspati⁸ also, which may suggest that it continued to enjoy authority in the Gupta period. Although the Gupta inscriptions do not refer to this practice, the Pāla inscriptions speak of such revenue officers as *grāmapati* (head of the village) and *dāśagrāmika* (head of ten villages), which latter term may be understood in the same sense as we find it in the law-book of Manu.⁹ In earlier times charges on land, which formed the primary source of revenue to the

1 *AS.* II. 1.

2 *Ibid.*, II. 35.

3 *Ibid.*, V. 3.

4 *Ibid.*, II. 1.

5 VII. 115-7.

6 *Ibid.*, 118-9.

7 VII. 115-20.

8 XIX. 44.

9 *History of Bengal*, i, 277.



state, were directly collected by the agents of the state or by the *gāmabhojaka*s or *gopas*, i.e., village headmen. For this purpose Kauṭilya provided that a census should be taken of all the households, recording the number of their inmates and the amount of property owned by them,¹ so that the government could determine the amount of taxable property and obtain an estimate of the labour power it might requisition. It seems that from the Gupta period the state shifted at least part of the burden of collecting taxes to the feudatories, which made it no longer necessary to maintain a record of households. This can be inferred from the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims. Writing in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. about the conditions in the Madhyadeśa, which lay in the heart of the Gupta empire, Fa-hsien observes: "They have not to register their households or attend to any magistrates and their rules."² This is an indication of the slackening of the Gupta central authority in taxation and executive administration. We get similar information from Hsüan Tsang about the state of administration in the first half of the 7th century A.D. To quote from him: "As the government is generous, official requirements are few. Families are not registered..."³ Therefore the observation of the Chinese pilgrims that families were not registered can be explained by assuming that the state no longer bothered about the direct collection of taxes from the peasants, which function was probably taken over by intermediaries between the tillers of the soil and the government. This may be taken as another presage of the feudalisation of the state apparatus. ✕

During the post-Gupta period there seems to have

1 *AS*, II, 35.

2 Samuel Beal, *Travels of Fah-hian and Sung-Yun*, Ch. XVI, p. xxxvii. *Chinese Literature*, 1956, No. 3, 154 gives the following translation:

"They are unencumbered by any polltax or official restrictions."

3 Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, i, 176.

taken place a significant change in the payment of officers employed by the state. If we rely on the authority of Kauṭilya, in the Maurya period all the officers of the state, except a few in the new settlements were paid in cash, the maximum salary being 48,000 *paṇas* and the minimum 60 *paṇas*, probably per month.¹ All this is found in the section *bhṛtyabharaṇīyam*, maintenance of servants, which prescribes the various scales of pay for all royal functionaries, high and low. Many officers are named, and in several cases it is stated that similar functionaries should be paid similarly.² However, some high priestly functionaries such as *ṛtvig*, *ācārya* and *purohita*, who are recommended 48,000 *paṇas* as pay, are also considered worthy of *brahmadeya*³ land in the new settlements. Again, in the new settlements some other functionaries of middle rank such as elephant-trainers, physicians and horse-trainers, who are assigned 2000 (*paṇas* ?) as pay, are recommended grant of land which they cannot sell or dispose of.⁴ Therefore except for some functionaries who are granted land in new settlements in addition to their regular remuneration in cash, all officers in the Kauṭilyan state are to be paid in cash. The position seems to have changed in the early centuries of the Christian era. The law-book of Manu, compiled probably in the second century, provides for the payment of fiscal officers by grants of land⁵—a provision which is repeated by the lawgivers of Gupta times. In the 5th century Brhaspati, while defining *prasāda-likhita*, a writing of favour, states that such a grant is made by the king when, pleased with the services, valour etc. of a person, he grants him a district or the

1 *AS*, V. 3.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *Ibid*.

4 *Ibid.*, II. 1.

5 VII 115-20.

like.¹ We have no precise idea of the mode of payment to the officers under the Gupta empire, for the Chinese evidence on this point is not quite clear. Legge's translation of a passage from Fa-hsien informs us that "the king's body-guards and attendants, all have regular salaries".² But Beal translates the passage differently: "The chief officers of the king have all allotted revenues"³; and recently a Chinese scholar has translated the crucial passage thus: "The king's attendants, guards, and retainers all receive emoluments and pensions".⁴ If we accept the last rendering, it would appear that the term emoluments, having a wider context, might include grants. At any rate (it is clear that in the time of Harṣavardhana high officers were not paid in cash for their services to the state, for one fourth of the royal revenues was earmarked for the endowment of great public servants.⁵ At one place Hsüan Tsang explicitly states that the governors, ministers, magistrates and officials had each a portion of land assigned to them for their personal support.⁶ These high officers, according to Harṣa's inscriptions, would include *daussādha-sādhanika*, *pramātāra*, *rājasthānīya*, *uparika* and *viṣayapati*.⁷ Thus under (Harṣa revenues were granted not only to priests and scholars⁸ but also to the officers of the state, a practice the existence of which is supported by the paucity of coins belonging to this period.)

Some inscriptions of the Gupta period show that villages were granted to secular parties, who adminis-

1 Quoted in *Vyavahāramayūkha* (tr. P. V. Kane & S. G. Patwardhan) pp 25-7.

2 *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, Tr., p. 5.

3 *Travels of Fah-hian etc.*, p. 55.

4 Ho Chang-chun, "Fa-hsien's Pilgrimage to Buddhist Countries", *Chinese Literature*, 1956, no. 3, 154.

5 Watters, op. cit., i, 176.

6 S. Beal (tr.), *Si-Yu-Ki*, i, 88.

7 *EI*, ii, no. 29, l. 9.

8 *Ibid.*, i, 87.

tered them for religious purposes. Under the Sāta-vāhanas and Kuṣāṇas cash endowments were made to the guilds of artisans for meeting religious needs, but under the Guptas land endowments were made to officials and others for the same purpose. A very early instance is found in Central India in A.D. 496-7 in a grant made by the Uccakalpa *māhārāja* Jayanātha.¹ A village was granted as an *agrahāra* to a scribe (*divira*) and his son and two grandsons, who were to manage it for religious purposes.² The inhabitants were asked to pay *bhāga bhoga, kara, hiranya*, etc. to the beneficiaries and to carry out their orders, but the donor retained the right of punishing the thieves.³ These concessions may not have been always utilised by the secular trustees in the interests of religion, and less so by the scribes whose oppressions were proverbial. Whether the scribe was placed in charge of the endowment to supplement his remuneration for secular services is not clear, but in practice he may not have missed the opportunity of lining his pockets.

In the same area several other similar grants were made by Śarvanātha, the son of Jayanātha. Thus in A.D. 512-3 Śarvanātha granted a village in four shares, two of which belonged to Viṣṇunandin, another to the merchant Śaktināga, and another to Kumāranāga and Skandanāga.⁴ The village was given with *udraṅga* and *uparikara* and was not to be entered by the irregular or regular troops⁵—an important administrative immunity which does not occur in the grant mentioned above. It is obvious that here the immediate beneficiaries were the secular parties, whose descendants were authorised to enjoy the grant in perpetuity.⁶ But the ultimate bene-

1 *CH*, iii, no. 27.

2 *Ibid.*, ii. 5-11.

3 *Ibid.*, ii. 11-14.

4 *Ibid.*, no. 28, ii. 1-17.

5 *Ibid.*, ii. 9-10.

6 *Ibid.*, ii. 12-13.

ficiaries were the two gods for whose worship and for the repairs of whose shrines this grant was made with the agreement of the donor and the donee.¹ At any rate it is clear that the fiscal and administrative rights were to be exercised by the secular beneficiaries, and only the proceeds were to be enjoyed by the temples. A grant of half of a village on similar terms was made by the same king to a person called Choḍugomika, again a secular party, who agreed with the donor that the endowment would be utilised for the worship of the goddess Piṣṭapurikādevī and the repairs of her temple.² All these grants give the impression that secular parties functioned as managers of the villages which were to be enjoyed by the temples.

But a writ of 533-34 made by the same king leaves no doubt that land grants were made even independently to secular parties. According to it two villages were bestowed as mark of favour in perpetuity with the fiscal and administrative rights mentioned above upon a person called Pulindabhāṭa,³ who seems to have been an aboriginal chief; the term used here is not *śasani-kṛta* which is found in many religious charters but *prasādi-kṛtau* which appears in the secular charters of subsequent times. In his turn the chief granted the two villages to Kumārasvāmin in perpetuity for the worship of Piṣṭapurikādevī and for the repairs of her temple.⁴ Thus it is certain that before their transfer Pulindabhāṭa held the two villages on the strength of a purely secular charter. Other secular assignments may have been made in the Gupta period, but since they were not connected with religious donations they were not recorded on lasting material such as stone and copper.

1 Ibid., 11. 13-16.

2 Ibid., no. 29, 11. 1-12.

3 Ibid., no. 31, 11. 1-10.

4 Ibid., 11. 11-13.

Inscriptions refer to secular assignees in the post-Gupta period. The two copper-plate grants of Ashrafpur from East Bengal, roughly assignable to the 7th-8th centuries,¹ mention quite a few. They indicate that plots of land donated to the head of the Buddhist monastery were alienated from several persons who were enjoying them, as can be inferred from the terms *bhojyamāna*² or *bhujyamānaka*.³ In a few cases the same plot of land had been successively used by two parties and then transferred to the monastery of the Buddhist preceptor Saṅghamitra.⁴ All such persons are named, but their position and identity cannot be established. However, in one instance land had been given to the queen⁵, maybe for maintenance; in another to a woman⁶ for some service rendered to the king; and still in another to a *sāmanta*⁷ for services rendered to the overlord. Apparently these and other persons held the plots of land in question as some kind of service grants which were resumed either at the lapse of the term or on some other grounds, otherwise these could not have been so easily transferred. Evidently no compensation was given to the parties who were deprived of their fiefs. All this suggests that in the 7th or the 8th century in East Bengal some services were remunerated by means of land which was granted for a limited period.

That religious services were remunerated by land grants and secular services by cash payments could not have been possible in the background of the existing economy, which, as shown later, was characterised by paucity of coins in post-Gupta times. So long as coins were in considerable use under the Kuṣāṇas and

1 *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, i, no.6, p. 86.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 90, Plate A, 1. 4.

3 *Ibid.*, 11, 5-6.

4 *Ibid.*, Plate B, 11. 8-9.

5 *Ibid.*, Plate A, 1. 4.

6 *Ibid.*, 11, 4-5.

7 *Ibid.*, 1. 5.

Sātavāhanas even religious needs were met through cash payments, which continued to some extent under the Guptas. But when they fell into comparative disuse both religious and secular services had to be paid by land grants. The former practice is clearly supported by the inscriptions. But if priests and temples were maintained by land grants, how could have been officers maintained otherwise?

The problem of payment to officers in grants of revenues can be further examined in the light of the designations of the administrative officers and units of the Gupta period. The titles *bhogika* and *bhogapatika* suggest that these officers were assigned offices not so much for exercising royal authority over the subjects and working for their welfare as for enjoying the revenues. Sometimes the *bhogika* held the office of *amātya* also.¹ We wonder whether in such a case the office of the *bhogika* was meant to remunerate its holder for his functions pertaining to the other office. Further, the office of the *bhogika* was generally hereditary, for at least three generations of *bhogikas* are mentioned in several cases.² All these factors must have naturally rendered the *bhogika* a powerful overlord, comparatively free from the control of the central authority. The *bhogapatika* is mentioned as one of about a dozen officers stationed in Vardhamāna *bhukti*, when the *mahārāja* Vijayasena was ruling there as a vassal of the *mahārājādhirāja* Śrī Gopacandra about A.D. 507.³ It has been rightly suggested that this officer was probably a *jāgirdār*.⁴ Some *bhogapatis* oppressed the rural communities. The *Harṣacarita* states that in course of the military march of Harṣa villagers made false complaints against *bhogapatis*.⁵

1 *CII*, iii, no. 23, ll. 18-20; 26, ll. 22-23.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 26, ll. 22-23.

3 *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 360, ll. 3-4.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 360, fn. 9.

5 P. 212.

Apparently in his anxiety to present the administration of his patron in a favourable light Bāṇa does not give credence to these complaints. Another feudal functionary in the time of Harṣa was *mahābhogī*, not mentioned in contemporary inscriptions from north India but mentioned in some epigraphs from Orissa.¹ In the *Kādambarī* Bāṇa's description of the *antaḥpura* in the palace of King Tārapiḍa refers to the presence at the doorway (*dvāra-prakoṣṭha*) of hundreds of *mahābhogis*,² who are taken by Agrawal as people living on the bounties of the state.³ We wonder whether these can be compared to the household retainers or warriors living in the houses of big vassals or kings in mediaeval Europe. Probably bounties took the form of land revenue granted in the rural areas to the *mahābhogis*, who occasionally flocked to the royal palace to pay homage to their liege-lord. The early Kalacuri inscriptions introduce a new official *bhogikapālaka*,⁴ who may have acted as superintendent over the *bhogikas*.⁵ In one case, towards the last quarter of the 6th century A.D., the *bhogikapālaka* also appears as *mahāpīlupali* (head of the elephant force).⁶ Whether he was given this post because of his services as *bhogikapālaka* or vice versa is not clear. But all the same such terms as *bhogika*, *bhogapatika* and *bhogikapālaka* smack of feudal relations.

✓The typical feudal idea that land or territory is meant for the enjoyment of those who hold it or govern it first comes into full view in the Gupta period.✓ Later Vedic texts declare that vaiśyas are meant to be fed upon by the rulers, while in post-Vedic times the Dharma-sūtras state that śūdras are meant for serving the three higher varṇas. The view that territories are intended

1 Binayak Misra, *Mediaeval Dynasties of Orissa*, pp. 24-5, Inscr. no. 1.

2 V. S. Agrawal, *Kādambarī*, p. 103.

3 Ibid.

4 *CII*, iv, no. 13, l. 4; no. 18, l. 9.

5 Ibid., *Introd.*, p. cxli.

6 Ibid., no. 13, l. 4.

for the enjoyment of officers first appears in the inscriptions of Aśoka, under whom the *janapada* seems to have been divided into *āhāras*¹, literally food meant for its holders and equivalent to a modern district or even subdivision. The administrative unit continued under the Sātavāhanas, and later in Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra as known from the early Kalacuri inscriptions² of Gupta and post-Gupta times, when several other terms signifying enjoyment came to be used commonly for territorial divisions.

It is suggested that the *bhogika* was possibly also connected with the *bhukti*,³ but in the Bengal inscriptions the governor of the *bhukti* is called *uparika*. The use of the term *bhukti*, which occurs in the sense of a territorial unit in the Gupta inscriptions, requires some explanation. The term first appears in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta. It is stated that the Kuṣāṇa rulers and those of Ceylon and the islands were allowed to retain possession of their *viṣayas* and *bhuktis* (dominions) on condition of paying homage and giving daughters in marriage.⁴ Afterwards *bhukti* recurs constantly in inscriptions in the sense of a large administrative unit. Literally the term *bhukti* means something intended for enjoyment, for the idea of rulers enjoying the earth was fairly current during this period.⁵ So it is likely that as a territorial unit the *bhukti* may have been meant for the enjoyment of the governor under whose charge it was placed.

The term *bhukti* can be compared with *bhoga*, a term of similar import. In an inscription of Central India (eastern part) dated A.D. 508-9 the phrase *mahārāja-*

1 Rūpnāth Minor Pillar Edict : Sarnāth Schism Pillar Edict.

2 *CII*, iv, pp. cxxiv-v.

3 *CII*, iii, p. 100, fn. 2.

4 *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 258, l. 24.

5 *ye bhuktā guptanāthairnna. Sel. Inscr.*, p. 394, verse 4.

*śarvanātha-bhoge*¹ clearly means the territory enjoyed by the *mahārāja Śarvanātha*. In this context the term *bhoga* probably implies enjoyment of territory by the Gupta feudatory *Śarvanātha* under the nominal authority of the emperor, but the term *bhukti* means enjoyment of territory under the emperor's direct and close control. In the inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri era, however, the term *bhoga* indicates a somewhat smaller revenue area placed under the charge of a *bhogika*.

In North India and Bengal the *bhukti* was divided into *viṣayas*, but if our interpretation of some phrases in the Dāmodarpur Copper-plate grants is accepted even the latter were meant for the enjoyment of district officers placed over them. The phrase *anuvahamānake koṭivarṣaviṣaye* has been rendered as 'ever-prospering district'.² But it would be more appropriate to take *anuvah* in the sense of carrying, which is supported by the comment to *Manu*, III. 7.³ Hence the term *anuvahamānake viṣaye* should be understood as a district bearing burdens, the nature of which is indicated by the use of the phrase *hasty-aśva-jana-ḥhogena*⁴ which shows that the district contributed to the enjoyment of the governor either by supplying elephants, cavalry and infantry or by defraying the cost of their maintenance by the district governor.⁵ Thus it would appear that the *viṣaya* of Koṭivarṣa had to bear the burden of the enjoyment of its governor by maintaining his forces.⁶

In the Maurya empire the *rājukas* or divisional heads were appointed by the emperor, but their counterparts in the Gupta empire, the *kumārāmātyas*, were appointed by

1 *CII*, iii, no. 24, l. 4.

2 R. G. Basak, *EL*, xv, 131, fn. 2.

3 Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s. v. *anuvah*.

4 *Sel. Inscr*, p. 338, l. 3.

5 The rendering, 'the government of the infantry, cavalry and the elephants' (*EL*, xv, 144) does not represent the literal meaning, but may be accepted in the secondary sense.

6 *EL*, xv, no. 1, plate no. 4, ll. 2-3.

the *uparika*. A passage in an inscription of Kumāra Gupta (A. D. 448) has been taken as indicating a closer personal relation between the head of a district (*kumārāmātya*) in Bengal and the Gupta emperor, and it is suggested that the *kumārāmātya* of Pañcanagarī, who is described as *bhāṭṭaraka-pād-ānudhyātaḥ* (devoted to the feet of the lord),¹ was appointed directly by Kumāra Gupta I.² But the term *bhāṭṭaraka*³ does not refer to Kumāra Gupta, for in all his three earlier Bengal inscriptions he is described as *paramabhāṭṭaraka*⁴. This is also found in two other inscriptions in which the Gupta emperor Budha Gupta is described in exactly similar terms. Therefore the crucial passage implies that the *kumārāmātya* of Pañcanagarī was devoted to his immediate lord, who may have been the head of the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.

It was only in the heart of the Gupta empire or in areas nearer home that even the head of the *viṣaya* was appointed by the Gupta emperor, as we find in the case of Śarvaṇāga, *viṣayapati* of Antarvedi or the country lying between the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā,⁵ but significantly enough here also the terms of the appointment of the district officer refer not to the administration or welfare of the subjects but to the enjoyment of his territory by the *viṣayapati*.⁶ Thus it would appear that, except in the areas in the heart of the empire, the Gupta emperor hardly enjoyed the direct allegiance of the district officers, who were devoted to their immediate lord rather than to their overlord,

But it would be wrong to assume that the *uparika*, *kumārāmātya* and *viṣayapati* behaved as independent feudal

1 *Sel Inscr.*, Baigrām Copper-plate Inscription of G. E. 128 (p. 342), l. 1.

2 B. C. Sen, *Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal*, p. 211.

3 *Sel. Inscr.*, pp. 280 and 285.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 324, l. 1; *EI*, xxiii, no. 8, ll. 10-11 (probably the inscription refers to Budha Gupta). Cf. *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 403., l. 1.

5 *CII*, iii, no. 16, ll. 3-4.

6 *antarvedyāṃ bhog-ābhivarddhaye varttamāne*. *Ibid.*, ll. 4-5.

barons. Ordinarily several royal officials, in some cases as many as nine, were connected with land grants in villages.¹ These grants mention higher and lower officers, but it is difficult to ascertain whether in all cases the designations of the officers are arranged in hierarchical order. A Gujarāt inscription (A.D. 541) recording a grant of land by the *mahāsāmanta mahārāja* Saṅgama-siṃha conveys his order to his subordinates, who include *rājasthānīyas*, *uparikas*, *kumārāmātyas*, *cāṭas*, *bhaṭas* and others.² The analogy of the Bengal inscriptions shows that the *uparika* was higher in status than the *viṣayapati* and *kumārāmātya*. This shows that the order regarding grants was conveyed not only to high officials but also to their subordinates, which indicates that the ruler (in this case a feudatory) tried to make his authority felt even over the heads of the *viṣaya*, although these were appointed by the *uparika*.

In course of time *amātya* and *kumārāmātya* became feudal titles. So far as the *amātyas* are concerned this was certainly the position in the time of Harṣa, for at least at two places the *Harṣacarita* speaks of those *amātyas* who were anointed *murdh-ābhiṣiktā-śc-āmātyā rājānaḥ*.³ Agarwala seems to suggest that the term *amātya* here should be taken in the sense of companion or *sakhā*⁴ and not in the sense of *mantrin*. But it would be better to take it in the sense of a high rank of honour or distinction. Agarwala adds that those who were attached to the prince were known as *kumārāmātya*.⁵ The office may have originated in this manner, but later it became an independent position without having anything to do with the

1 *CII*, iv, no. 7, ll. 2-4.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 11, ll. 1-3.

3 *śrutābhijanaśiṣālino murdh-ābhiṣiktā-śc-āmātyā-rājānaḥ*. *HC*, p. 173. Crowned princes are represented as *amātya* according to Agrawala, *Harṣacarita*, p. 112.

4 *HC*, p. 112.

5 *Ibid.*

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prince. It seems that the *kumārāmātya* was lower in rank than the *amātya*. The fact that the *mantrin*, *senāpati*, *mahādanḍanāyaka*, *viṣayapati* and other high administrative functionaries of Gupta times held the title of *kumārāmātya* is taken to suggest that it provided a cadre of officers, like the *amātyas* of the *Arthaśāstra*, from which all the high-ranking officers were recruited. But it would better explain things if the *kumārāmātya* were taken as a feudal rank of honour conferred on high functionaries, including even a *mahārāja*.¹ Whether the title carried some fiscal or other privileges is not clear. But towards the end of the reign of the Imperial Guptas we find the *kumārāmātya mahārāja* Nandana making a land grant without the permission of the overlord, which suggests that by the middle of the 6th century A.D. the *kumārāmātyas* had emerged as *de facto* lords of villages which they could give away.

✓The growing hereditary character of the divisional ✓ and district officers, from the Gupta period onwards, undermined central authority and tended to feudalise the administration further. ✓Although Kauṭilya lays down that officials (*amātyas*) and soldiers should be hereditary, we have hardly any contemporary epigraphic evidence to support this. But the inscriptions of the Gupta period show that the posts of the *mantrin* and the *saciva*, who served with the Gupta emperor, were hereditary ;² so was the post of the *amātya* in Central India³ and Vaiśālī⁴. In one case in Central India we find five generations of office-holders in one family, of whom the first was *amātya*, the second *amātya* and *bhogika*, the third *bhogika*, and the fourth and the fifth *mahāsāndhivigrahika*.⁵ The same region also furnishes other instances of two⁶ and

1 *JASB*, NS V (1909), 164.

2 *Sel. Inscr.*, pp. 282-283, ll. 6-7 ; *CII*, iii, no. 6, ll. 3-4.

3 *CII*, iii, no. 22, ll. 28-30.

4 Dikshitar, *The Gupta Polity*, pp. 149-50.

5 *CII*, iii, no. 22, ll. 28-30 ; no. 23, ll. 18-20.

6 *Ibid.*, no. 27, ll. 21-22.

sometimes three¹ generations of *bhogikas*. Further, the surname *datta* of the *uparikas* in charge of the *bhukti* of Puṇḍravardhana² suggests that they probably belonged to the same family. Theoretically the emperor enjoyed the power of dismissing his officials, but in practice they and their descendants continued to be in office because of their local strength. They further gained in power and influence because of the practice of combining several offices in the same person.

From the 7th century A.D. onwards officials began to be invested with pompous, feudal titles. Bhāskaravarman's treasurer (*bhāṇḍāgārādhikṛt*) Divākaraprabha held the title of *mahāsāmanta*.³ Similarly the officers of Harṣavardhana were designated as *mahāsāmanta*.⁴ What is more important, the pompous epithet, acquirer of the *pañcamahāśabda*, came to be applied to the officials and vassals in this period. In Eastern India this epithet was conferred on some high functionaries of the state. The chief executor of a grant of Bhāskaravarman was known as *prāpta-pañcamahāśabda*.⁵ In Western India the early Gurjara king Dadda II held this title⁶ and passed it on to the Sendrakas in the third quarter of the 7th century.⁶

The Rāṣṭrakūṭa chief Nannarāja, a direct collateral ancestor of Dantidurga, claims in his grant of 631-2 that unlike his ancestors he was a ruler entitled to the dignity of the *pañcamahāśabda*, which he had personally won.⁷ This implies that only certain remarkable services rendered by the vassal to his overlord enabled him to earn this privilege. According to the *Mānasollāsa*, a text of the 12th century, this privilege signified the use of

1 Ibid., no. 26, ll. 22-23.

2 *Sel. Inser.*, p. 284, l. 3 ; p. 324, l. 2 ; p. 328, l. 2.

3 R. B. Pandey, *Historical and Literary Inscriptions*, no. 56, l. 50.

4 Ibid., ll. 47-8.

5 *CII*, iv, no. 16, l. 31.

6 *El*, xxviii, no. 34, Plate A, ll. 11-12 ; Plate B, l. 16.

7 Altekar, *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their Times*, p. 7.

five musical instruments,¹ which are referred to by a Jain writer Ravakoṭyācārya and enumerated by a Liṅgāyat writer as *śṛṅga* (horn), *tammaṭa*, *śaṅkha* (conch), *bheri* (drum), and *jayaghaṇṭā* (bell of victory).² This was possibly at first a prerogative of the paramount power, but later extended to vassals.

~It is striking to note that during the Gupta period village headmen appointed by the king were becoming semi-feudal officers primarily concerned with their own gains.~What was done in the Maurya period by the superintendent of agriculture in the interests of the state was now done by the village headman (*grām-āhipati-āyuktaka*) for filling his own granary.³ The *āyuktaka*, who seems to be mentioned as a village official in some Central Indian inscriptions of the early 5th century A.D.,⁴ lived upon a share of the agricultural produce of the village people,⁵ probably sending the major portion thus realised to the king. What is remarkable is that he could impose forced labour on peasant women to serve his own needs,⁶ and not for the sake of the ruler, as was the case in earlier times.

~During the Gupta period there arose a new type of village which served as the resort of royal favourites. It is stated in a Purāṇa text that such a village was mostly inhabited by wicked and powerful people who, not owning any fields themselves, lived upon the fields of others.⁷ The class of royal favourites, who formed a group of intermediaries, seems to have been an important concomitant of feudal development on the political side.~

1 III. verse 1336.

2 *IA*, rii, 96.

3 *Kāma S.*, V. 5. 5.

4 *CH*, iv, no. 6, l. 2 (only the *āyuktaka* is mentioned in connection with a land grant); no. 7, ll. 2-4.

5 *Kāma S.*, V. 5. 5.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, 49. 49. M. N. Dutt's tr. of this passage seems to be better than that of Pargiter.

The process of conquest, by which smaller chiefs were reduced to subordination and reinstated in their positions provided they paid regular tributes and did homage, contributed in large measure to the growth of feudal relations. It reached its culmination with Samudra Gupta, whose whirlwind conquests of vast areas led to the establishment of such relations on a much wider scale and provided a pattern for his successors. During the 6th century A.D. the term used for conquered feudatories was *sāmanta*. It is evident from its use in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and the inscriptions of Aśoka¹ that in the Maurya period this term meant independent neighbours. In post-Maurya law-books it was used in the sense of a neighbouring proprietor of land,² and not in the sense of a feudal lord as has been made out in a recent work.³ Similarly there is no evidence for the view that Manu (VII. 136 & 9) provides for the collection of the share of produce, taxes, fines etc. by the *sāmantas* (estate-owners) and not by the 'king' or ruler of the country.⁴

✓ It seems that as early as the third quarter of the fifth century A.D. the term *sāmanta* was used in the sense of vassal in South India, for the phrase *sāmanta-cūḍāmaṇayaḥ* appears in a Pallava inscription of the time of Śāntivarman (c. A.D. 455-70). ✓ In the last quarter of the same century the term occurs in some grants of Southern and Western India in the sense of vassal.⁵ In North India the earliest uses of the term in a similar sense seem to have been in a Bengal inscription, and in the Barabar Hill Cave Inscription of the Maukhari chief Anantavarman, in which his father is described as '*sāmanta-cūḍāmaṇiḥ*'

1 *AS*, I, 6 ; R. E., II, 1, 5.

2 *Manu* (SBE), VIII 286-9 ; *Yāj.*, II. 152-3.

3 B. N. Dutt, *Hindu Law of Inheritance*, p. 27.

4 Pran Nath, *Economic Conditions in Ancient India*, p. 160.

5 R. B. Pandey, *Historical and Literary Inscriptions*, no. 29, 1.31.

These instances have been collected by L. Gopal, in "Sāmanta—its varying Significance in Ancient India", *JRAS*, Pts I & 2, April 1963.

(‘the best among feudatories’).¹ Paleographically this inscription is placed earlier than A.D. 554, the date of the Harhā Inscription², and hence the date of Anantavarman’s father may be put round about A.D. 500, when the Maukharis were the *sāmantas* of the Imperial Guptas. The next important mention of the term *sāmanta* is found in the Mandasor Stone Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman (C. A.D. 525-535), in which he claims to have subjugated the *sāmantas* (feudatories) in the whole of Northern India.³ During the 6th century A.D. the rulers of Valabhī bore the title of *sāmanta-mahārāja* and *mahāsāmanta*. Gradually the application of the term *sāmanta* was extended from defeated chiefs to royal officials. Thus, in the inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, from A.D. 597 onwards *rājās* and *sāmantas* took the place of *uparikas* and *kumār-āmātyas*.⁴ Later, in the land grants of Harṣavardhana the terms *sāmanta-mahārāja* and *mahāsāmanta* appear as the titles of great imperial officers.⁵

The term *sāmanta* is not used for the feudatories of Samudra Gupta, but their obligations are clearly set forth in the Allahabad Inscription, which shows that in return for being reinstated in their thrones the conquered and subjugated princes were expected to pay all tributes, to carry out royal orders, to give their daughters in marriage, and to render homage to the conqueror.⁶ Bāṇa, the first writer to indicate the obligations of the *sāmantas*, in his *Harṣacarita* provides a kind of gloss on the precious little extracted from the inscription of Samudra Gupta. We learn that Puṣpabhūti had made his *mahāsāmantas* as his tributaries (*karada*).⁷ In the areas administered by the *sāmantas*

1 CII, iii, no. 49, l. 4.

2 R. G. Basak, *The History of N. E. India*, p. 105.

3 *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 394, verse 5.

4 CII, iv, introd., p. cxli.

5 *EI*, i, 67f; iv, 208.

6 Ll. 22-4.

7 *karadikṛta mahāsāmanta*. *HC*, p. 100.

the emperor realised annual taxes from them and not from the subjects.¹ Whether the vassals were free to increase the taxes or to impose fresh ones is not clear, but they were held accountable for royal taxes in the areas held by them.

The *Kādambarī* mentions five modes of saluting the king (*praṇām-āgamana*) by the defeated kings, who were certainly reduced to the position of *sāmantas*. These included salute by bowing the head, bowing the head and touching the feet of the emperor, bowing the head and touching the palm of the feet of the emperor (described as taking the dust from the feet of the emperor by the defeated *sāmanta* on his head in the *Harṣacarita*), and finally placing the head on the earth near the feet of the emperor.²

The obligation of the *sāmantas* to pay yearly tributes to the emperor is evident. Their second obligation, to pay homage to the emperor in person, is graphically described by Bāṇa. He tells us how the defeated *mahāsāmantas* greeted the conqueror by removing their crowns and headdresses (*śekhara* and *mauli*). They were subjected to various kinds of humiliation in the court of Harṣa. Some served as bearers of fans, others prayed for life by tying a sword to their neck; and still others, deprived of all their possessions, were always eager to salute the emperor with folded hands and allowed their beard to grow till their fate was finally decided by the conqueror.³

Defeated kings, apparently reduced to the position of the *sāmantas*, were made to render three kinds of services to king in the court. They held *chowries* as the conquered hostile vassal-chiefs did in the court of Harṣa.⁴ They

1 Agrawala, *Harṣacarita*, p. 217.

2 Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, p. 128. According to Agrawala nos. IV and V are covered by the term *śekhari-bhavantu pāda-rajāṃsi* (p. 128).

3 *HC*, p. 60.

4 *Ibid.*

served as door-keeper in the court by holding a rod of cane in the hand¹; and they served as reciters of auspicious words uttering 'success' (*jaya*)². These three modes of serving by the defeated kings (*paricārikī-karaṇa*) are enumerated by Bāṇa in the *Kādambarī*³. What appears to be a humiliation was considered a privilege by them. They made repeated inquiries with the gate-keeper about the possibility of getting an audience with the emperor⁴.

The obligation of presenting daughters to the conqueror is known from the Allahabad Inscription but not from Bāṇa, according to whom the defeated *sāmantas* furnished their minor princes or sons to the conqueror⁵. Probably these were to be trained in the imperial traditions, so that they might grow loyal to their overlord. On the other hand on the occasion of the installation of Yaśovatī as chief queen the wives of noble *sāmantas* consecrated her with water from golden pitchers and thus offered her their services⁶. This, however, appears as an obligation to be carried out in times of peace. But, by and large, the obligations of the vassals known from Bāṇa relate to the defeated chiefs called *śatru-mahāsāmanta*, required to serve the conqueror in various ways in consequence of their defeat.

Whether the *sāmantas* had any administrative or judicial functions to perform in times of peace is stated neither in the law-books nor in the *Harṣacarita*. However, we learn that on the advice of the *pradhāna* (chief) *sāmantas*, whose voice could not be disregarded, Rājyavardhana took food⁷ when he was afflicted with grief on the loss of his sister Rājyaśrī. If the counsel of the vassals could not be ignored in personal matters, how could it be on

1 *HC*, p. 194.

2 Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, pp. 127-8.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *HC*, p. 60.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

administrative matters which required their help and co-operation ?

Some *sāmantas* made religious grants without reference to their overlord. One of the earliest examples is the Vappaghoṣavāṭa grant of Jayanāga, who ruled in the latter half of the 6th century with his headquarters at Karṇasuvarṇaka in the District of Murshidabad¹. It states that (his) *sāmanta*, Nārāyaṇa-bhadra, who was enjoying the Audumbarika District, asked the *mahāpratīhāra* Sūryasena to convey his order granting the village Vappaghoṣavāṭa to Bhaṭṭa Brahma-vīrasvāmin², which was done through a copper-plate charter³. The practice was not confined to Eastern India. In the first half of the 7th century A.D.⁴ the *sāmanta* Indrarāja granted a village to a brāhmaṇa in Madhya Pradesh⁵, apparently without reference to his overlord who is not mentioned by him.

It seems that the *sāmantas* living in the court had to carry out certain social obligations. They took part in the various amusements such as gambling, dice-playing, playing on the flute, drawing portraits of the king, solving puzzles, etc⁶. Similarly their wives also had to attend the court on festive occasions⁷. Thus the vassals were linked with the lord not only militarily and administratively but also socially.

Bāṇa speaks of *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *āptasāmanta*, *pradhāna-sāmanta*, *śatru-mahāsāmanta*, and *pratisāmanta*. Of these the *mahāsāmanta* was obviously a step higher than the *sāmanta*, and the *śatru-mahāsāmanta* was a conquered enemy chief. *Āptasāmantas*⁸ were probably those who willingly accepted the vassalage of the overlord. *Pradhānasāmantas* were the

1 *EI*, xviii, 60-2.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 7, ll. 1-7.

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 7-14.

4 *EI*, xxiii, 209.

5 *Ibid.*, no. 41, ll. 7-15.

6 Agrawala, *Kādambari*, p. 100.

7 *HC*, p. 143.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

most trusted hands of the emperor, who never disregarded their advice, but it is difficult to make anything out of the term *pratisāmanta*¹; probably he was a vassal opposed to the king or merely a hostile vassal. In any case it is clear that the usage of the term *sāmanta* was well established and there were as many as half a dozen kinds of vassals.

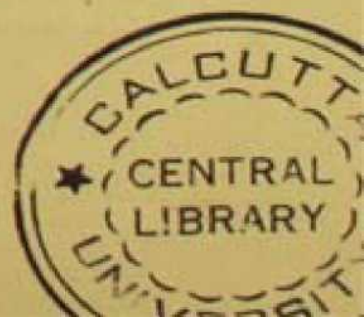
The princes, no better than vassals, were divided into three categories: i) the *śatru-mahāsāmantas* who rendered various services to the emperor and were treated with respect; ii) the *maḥīpālas* who were forced to submit to the prestige (*pratāpa*) of the emperor; and iii) those who were attracted to him out of their admiration and affection (*anurāga*) for him². At one place Bāṇa refers to *anurakta mahāsāmantas*, which might suggest that there were especially attached to their overlord.

Normally an important duty of these *rajas* and *sāmantas* was to render military aid to their overlord. The description of the march of Harṣa shows that the army is made up of the troops—men and horse—supplied by the *rājās*; and their number is so huge that Harṣa is amazed at the sight of the concourse³. Even discounting an element of exaggeration in the number of Harṣa's army as recorded by Hsüan Tsang, this is so huge that the contrast between his army and that of the Mauryas is quite evident. It would be too much to expect that, with diminished resources, over which Harṣa's government did not exercise the same amount of control as the Mauryas, he would be able to maintain such a vast army, apparently not essential for the day-to-day defence of a kingdom much smaller in extent. The only probable explanation seems to be that this was a feudal militia which was mustered only in times of war. This hypothesis is borne out by the Aihole Inscription, composed

1 *pratisāmanta-cakṣuṣām-iva nanāśa nidrā kumudavanānām*, HC, p. 219.

2 Ibid., p. 60; cf. Agrawala, *Harṣacarita*, p. 43.

3 HC, pp. 209-10.



in praise of his valiant adversary Pulakeśin, which describes Harṣa as equipped with the hosts supplied by his vassals¹. It is obvious that the practice of supplying troops to the lord made him dependent on his feudatories.

It is not clear whether the *sāmantas* were bound to Harṣa by grants of the revenues of villages. But this was exactly the relation between the emperor and the *agrahārikas*, who, however, seem to have owed no obligation to their benefactor. Some *agrahārikas* on their own initiative came out of their villages to welcome Harṣa with curd, raw sugar (*guḍa*), and sugar in closed cases, and the *daṇḍadhārīs* scared them away by means of threats and chidings². But in general probably the grantees did nothing more than wish Harṣa well in his expedition by getting pitchers lifted in the hands of the village elders (*mahattaras*)³.

Our discussion of the duties of the *sāmantas* and similar other dignitaries should not lead us to think that these are precisely defined in any law-book or theoretical text of Gupta or post-Gupta times, but they are clearly reflected in some contemporary literary works.

Central authority was further undermined by the loss of royal monopoly over the possession of horses and elephants, especially the latter. In the pre-Maurya period elephants seem to have been ordinarily owned by the king, for in a Jātaka story an elephant is given as a reward by a king to the thirty families forming a village⁴. Where power lay in the hands of more than one man, every member of the ruling class had to supply an elephant to the state; this was the case with the 5000-strong aristocratic state on the Beas⁵. We learn from Megasthenes that in the Maurya period no private person

1 *sāmantasenā-mukutaṃmaṇi-mayūkh-ākṛānta-pād-āravindah*, verse 23.

2 *HC*, p. 212.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Jāt.* i, 200.

5 Strabo, XV. 37, McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, p. 45.

was allowed to keep either a horse or an elephant, for these animals were held to be the special property of the king¹. Quoting from Megasthenes Strabo states that royal stables were provided for horses and elephants and a royal magazine for arms, because the soldier had to return his arms to the magazine and his elephant to the stables². The number of horses and elephants possessed by the king was considerable, for Kauṭilya provides for the posts of superintendent of horses and elephants³. Thus in the pre-Maurya and Maurya-periods horses and elephants do not seem to have been owned by private individuals. The old tradition of elephants being the exclusive possession of the king is recorded in the *Raghuvaṃśa*, in which, along with other things, elephants from the forests are said to constitute the wages of the king for protecting the earth⁴. But in fact from the post-Maurya period onwards the position began to change. The *Milinda-pañha* states that the best of elephants, horses etc. belong to the king⁵, which shows that royal possession was limited only to the elephants of the best quality. This monopoly was further undermined in the Gupta period. Nārada lays down that owners of elephants and horses should not pay any fine for mischief caused by these animals, for they are looked upon as protectors of the king's subjects⁶. This signifies that horses and elephants were owned by private individuals, although superintendents of these animals are mentioned as important functionaries in the law-book of Brhaspati⁷, and also in contemporary inscriptions. We further learn that the

1 Strabo, XV. 41-43, McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 90.

2 Strabo, XV. 52, McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, p. 55.

3 *AS*, II. 30-2.

4 XVII. 66.

5 Ed. V. Trenckner, p. 192.

6 XI. 32, cf. 30.

7 *Samskāra Kānda*, p. 301, verse, 305.

possession of horses and elephants by the high functionaries of the state was considered a menace to royal power. Thus the *Kāmandaka Nītisāra*, a post-Gupta text, provides that information should be kept about the elephants and horses of the *mahāmātra* (superior officer) and the *purohita* (chief priest)¹. While in the interests of the ruler vigil was to be maintained over the military strength of the high functionaries, in relation to the subjects they were allowed an amount of latitude which they did not enjoy before. Gautama, a law-book which is pre-Maurya in its essentials, imposes a fine on the owner whose horse causes damage². But in such a case Nārada exempts the owners of elephants and horses on the ground that they are protectors of the subjects³. Another passage of the same text, however, implies that the owner of a horse is liable to punishment for the offence committed by the animal if it has been deliberately set to do it⁴. So it would appear that in the Gupta period owners of elephants and horses, who were probably local chiefs, were regarded as natural protectors of the people, a function which was formerly discharged by regularly appointed officers of the state.

The number of elephants possessed by chiefs and princes seems to have determined their relative status. According to a Chinese account of A.D. 727 the Central Indian king possessed 900 elephants, and the big chiefs possessed 200 to 300 elephants⁵. In between we find the princes of middle rank. Thus the king of South India owned 800 elephants, that of West India 500-600 elephants, and that of North India 300 elephants⁶.

1 *KNS*, XII. 44.

2 Ed. A.F. Stenzler, XII. 24.

3 XI. 32.

4 *Nār.*, XV, XVI. 32.

5 Jan Yun-hua, "Hui-Ch'ao and his Work ; A Reassessment". *The Indo-Asian Culture*, xii, 184.

6 *Ibid.*

In India the need for protection did not lead to any considerable practice of commendation, which was so common in Europe on account of the anarchical conditions created by barbarian invasions. Nevertheless, the law-book of Viṣṇu, a work of about the 3rd century A.D., states that, in order to obtain wealth and security, the householder should apply to a lord¹. But actual examples of commendation are very few. According to an inscription of about the 8th century A.D., from the District of Hazaribagh, Bihar, the people of three villages commended themselves to a merchant prince who offered them protection by meeting on their behalf a demand made by their king for *avalagana*². With the king's approval they requested the merchant to become their *rājā*, and he readily agreed to do so³. It is held that the term *avalagā* or *olaga* is of Kannaḍa origin and means military service to or attendance on one's lord⁴. We may add that since the Karṇāṭas are mentioned as serving in the army of the Pālas from the 8th century A.D. onwards, they may have introduced this word in the north. But we are not sure whether the term *avalagana* used in this inscription carries the meaning proposed above. According to this record Ādisimha, the king of Magadha, demands *avalagana*⁵ from three villages, which obviously means royal dues in cash and kind, and not some kind of feudal service rendered by the tenant to his lord or by the lord to his overlord. Of course when the merchant Udayamāna undertakes to pay *avalagana* on behalf of the villages and the king installs him as the *rājā* of three villages⁶, it implies a kind of feudal contract between the overlord and

1 *atha yoga-kṣem-ārtham-iśvaram-adhiḡacchet*. LXIII, 1.

2 *EI*, ii, no. 27, ll. 6-7.

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 1-10.

4 *Summaries of Papers*, Silver Jubilee Session of the Indian History Congress (Poona, 1963), p. 15.

5 *EI*, ii, 27, l. 7.

6 *Ibid.*, ll. 7-8.

his vassal similar to that which we find in Europe. Further, when Udayamāna makes over one of the villages to his younger brother who is made a kind of sub-rājā¹, it clearly illustrates secular subinfeudation. Whatever might be the meaning of the term *avalagana*, which does not appear in any early mediaeval land grant but in two Prākṛt texts of the 8th century and again in the texts of the 12th, 14th or even 16th century², the inscription in question certainly exemplifies the feudal practices of commendation and subinfeudation, leading to the weakening of central authority.

There is another important indication that central authority was growing weaker and local lords stronger. Nārada lays down that those who oppose the king and prevent the payment of taxes should be dealt with by similar people³. Although the theory of 'divide and rule' is very old, the advice that disorderly elements should be used one against the other suggests that officials under the direct control of the state were incapable of dealing with certain powerful individuals who, in all probability, approximated to the status of feudal intermediaries.

✓The economic developments which created conditions for the origin of feudalism are rather difficult to determine. In this connection it has to be considered whether land granted to the brāhmaṇas and temples was cultivated or uncultivated, and whether such beneficiaries or other landowners were the actual tillers of the soil or got their fields cultivated by temporary peasants. A Sātavāhana inscription from the Western Deccan of A.D. 130 grants a part of the royal land to some Buddhist monks, and states that if the land is not cultivated the village is not to be settled.⁴ This clearly shows that at least from

1 Ibid., ll. 9-11.

2 An article (not published as yet) on *avalagana* by Dasharatha Sharma submitted to the Poona Session (1963) of the Indian History Congress.

3 Nār., X. 4, 5 & 7.

4 *ta ca kheta (na) kasate sa ca gamo na vasati*, *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 194, ll. 3-4.

the 2nd century A.D. villages which were given away possessed cultivated lands. In the Ikṣvāku inscriptions of the Krishna-Guntur area in Andhra Pradesh, of the second half of the 3rd century A.D., the ruler is referred to as the giver of hundreds and thousands of *hala* (as much land as can be cultivated by one plough) measures.¹ The use of *hala* as a measure of land by the Ikṣvāku rulers definitely shows that plough cultivation was well known to the people of Andhra from the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. Although we are not in a position to ascertain the nature of the villages granted to the brāhmaṇas as gifts for sacrifices in the Western Deccan during the 1st century B.C.,² it is evident that such villages granted in the 2nd and 3rd centuries of the Christian era were cultivated.

The use of the terms *khila* and *aprahata* in the Gupta land grants of North and Eastern Bengal has been interpreted as meaning that waste and uncultivated lands were given to the brāhmaṇas, but this interpretation does not suit all cases. For instance, in the Baigram Copper-plate inscription of A.D. 448 the term *khila-kṣetra*³ cannot be taken in the sense of uncultivated and waste land. First, in the contemporary law-book of Nārada the term *khila* is defined as a tract of land which has not been under cultivation for three years.⁴ Secondly, in the above-mentioned grant the *khila-kṣetra* is accompanied by some homestead land for a class of persons serving the temples,⁵ which suggests that it was not entirely waste land. Similarly, in the Dāmodarpur Copper-plate inscription of A.D. 543 the phrases *aprahata* and *khila*⁶ seem to have been used

1 Ibid., pp. 219-20, ll. 4-5 ; p. 222, l. 4 ; p. 227, l. 1 ; p. 229, ll. 3-4 ; p. 230, l. 6.

2 Ibid., p. 187, ll. 10-11.

3 Ibid., p. 343, ll. 6-7.

4 XI. 26.

5 *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 343, l. 9 & fn. 9.

6 Ibid., p. 338, ll. 6-7.

in a conventional sense, for in this case land is so scarce that five *kulyavāpas* of land have to be purchased at three places.¹ Besides, here also untilled (*aprahata*) and fallow (*khila*) land is accompanied by homestead land (*vāstu*)², which makes it doubtful whether the land was waste. And finally, the land in question is not always described as *aprahata*, for at one place the whole area of five *kulyavāpas* is defined as *khila*.³ We learn from another Dāmodarpur land grant of the last quarter of the 5th century A.D. that four *kulyavāpas* of land meant for a gift to a god called Kokāmukhasvāmin and seven *kulyavāpas* to Śvetavarāhasvāmin, both purchased by a merchant, were cultivated areas beyond any doubt.⁴

The grants of land to temples and brāhmāṇas in the eastern part of modern Madhya Pradesh, in the dominions of the Parivrājaka feudatories of the Guptas, differed from those made in Bengal in two important respects. The Bengal grants, which were the results of sale transactions effected by individuals, transferred plots of land, while the Central India grants, which were made by feudatories, gave away villages. The Bengal grants, which were made with the sanction of the officers of the central government, carried immunity from taxes only, but the Central India grants provided administrative immunities as well. Nevertheless, as in the case of the Bengal grants, in Central India also terms denoting uncultivated land were used in a conventional sense. Although several grants in Central India were made 'according to the maxim of the fallow land' (*bhūmicchidranyāya*), there is hardly any other indication to show that the villages were not cultivated and settled. In most cases the term *bhūmicchidranyāya* served as a legal fiction. Thus two villages, which were granted according

1 Ibid., p. 338.

2 Ibid., ll. 15-18.

3 Ibid., ll. 17-18.

4 Ibid., p. 328, ll. 5-7.

to this maxim to the brāhmaṇas for carrying on the worship of the goddess Piṣṭapurikā-devī and repairing a temple, were clearly settled.¹ They were inhabited by brāhmaṇas and others, to whom the order regarding the grant was conveyed.² Further, these villages had been bestowed earlier, as a mark of favour, upon Pulinda-bhaṭa (evidently a brāhmaṇa), who in his turn granted these to another priest Kumārasvamin,³ for which act he obtained the sanction of the *mahārāja* Śarvanātha. Incidentally this also shows the process of subinfeudation.

Similarly in the inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, found in Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra and dating from the 5th to the 7th century A.D., the term *bhūmicchidra* is apparently used in the grants of those villages and plots of lands which were settled and cultivated.⁴ Of all these nine cases only three refer to grants of plots of land, the remainder six dealing with grants of villages. It is significant that, in the earliest inscription (early decades of the 5th century A.D.) belonging to this group, the order of the *mahārāja* Subandhu regarding the grant of a village is conveyed to its inhabitants,⁵ although the village is granted according to the *bhūmicchidranyāya*: If settled villages were granted according to this maxim even in the early part of the 5th century A.D., the mention of *bhūmicchidranyāya* in the grants of the 6th and 7th centuries may have been a mere formality. Thus in a *bhūmicchidranyāya* grant of A.D. 642 from Gujarāt land seems to have been granted with a farm-house (*saśibaram*),⁶ which shows that it was cultivated land. In another case the settled character of the granted land is very

1 CII, iii, no. 31, ll. 7-11, 13.

2 Ibid., l. 7.

3 Ibid., ll. 10-12.

4 CII, iv, no. 7, l. 9; no. 11, l. 10; no. 14, l. 20; no. 15, l. 21; no. 16, l. 34; no. 17, l. 34; no. 19, l. 15; no. 20, l. 13; no. 21, l. 29.

5 *grāma-prativāsinah*, CII, iv, no. 7, ll. 3-4.

6 Ibid., no. 20, ll. 12-13 and p. 80, fn. 10.

evident, for the 'fallow' land was granted along with irrigation facilities.¹

The usual phraseology in almost all such grants is that villages and plots of land were granted together with *udraṅga* and *uparikara*, inclusive of all dues and exempt from all gifts, forced labour and special rights, and not to be entered by *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas*, which again suggests that these were settled areas. In several cases the donees were also entitled to the receipt of fines realised from those who were convicted of ten offences. The long list of taxes and imposts from which the donees are granted exemption hardly allows us to presume that these villages were virgin land. In this context the term *avanirandhranyāya*, the equivalent of *bhūmicchidranāya*, also appears as a legal fiction. Thus in Mahārāṣṭra a village was granted according to the maxim of *avanirandhra* in A.D. 572, but it was declared free from the obligation of gifts, forced labour, cess for providing meals to royal officers on tour, and all taxes, and was invested with the powers of adjusting local disputes,² which makes it likely that it was a settled village.

Therefore we must be very careful in interpreting such terms as *khila*, *aprahata*, *bhūmicchidra* and *avanirandhra* used in the land grants of the 5th to the 7th century A.D. Just as the grandiloquent titles of the kings in the inscriptions are not necessarily a measure of their exploits, so also such descriptions of land do not always indicate its real character. More often than not these are rather in keeping with the form than with the substance.

In some cases the order regarding the grant of a village to the brāhmaṇas is conveyed to the brāhmaṇa and other inhabitants of that village³, which shows that the brāhmaṇas are not introduced into the village for the first

¹ These were provided by means of *cāpi*, *kūpa* and *taḍāka*. *CII*, iv, no. 21.1, 28.

² *Ibid.*, 120, ll. 18-20.

³ *CII*, iii, do. 31, l. 7.

time. Most land grants, especially those dated in the first four centuries of the Kalacuri-Cedi era, do not furnish any information about the original residence of the brāhmaṇa donees, although their *gotra* is frequently described as Bhāradvāja. But, where their place of residence is mentioned, it does not seem to be far away from the site of the land granted to them. Thus we have many instances of granting cultivated land which may be compared to feudal practices in mediaeval Europe, with the difference that in Gupta and post-Gupta India the recipients mostly belonged to the priestly order and were small in number.

It has been suggested that the practice of granting land in Bengal extended the area under cultivation and rural settlement¹, a point which has been stressed by Kosambi, in relation to other parts of India². During Gupta and post-Gupta times this seems to have been true of some areas in northern and eastern Bengal, but generally in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra settled villages and cultivated plots of land were the objects of gifts. Grants to pioneering brāhmaṇas probably began in the pre-Maurya period, when sometimes parts of the royal domain were granted to the brāhmaṇas in Magadha and Kosala³, and they continued in the Maurya period, when areas of land free from taxes and punishments were set apart for certain sections of brāhmaṇas⁴; in the later case it is clear that the grant was meant to extend the area of land under cultivation, for the relevant provision in the *Arthaśāstra* is a part of the plan of founding new settlements⁵. The process continued in subsequent times.

Land grants played an important part in the colonisation of new areas in Gupta and post-Gupta periods. For

1 P. C. Chakravarti, *Hist. of Bengal*, i, 648-9.

2 *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, pp. 291-6

3 *DN*, i, 87, 111, 114, 127, 131 & 224.

4 *AS*, II, 1.

5 *Ibid*.

pre-Maurya and especially Maurya times we have some literary evidence, and the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya recommends large-scale reclamation of virgin land partly through land grants. But the epigraphs seem to suggest the process from the beginning of the Christian era. From the Gupta period onwards deliberate attempts were made to extend the arable land by means of grants. It was realised that barren tracts could be of no use to the owners unless these were made cultivable, and so grants were made to priests and temples with the object of bringing such lands under cultivation. According to an inscription of Samācārdeva from Bengal, assignable to the second half of the 6th century A.D.¹, when a brāhmaṇa approached the elders of a district for a piece of land, they decided to grant it on the ground that it was full of pits and infested with beasts and hence was of no spiritual or material benefit to the king; they thought that if it was rendered capable of being enjoyed by the beneficiary it could bear both religious and economic fruits to the king². Such intentions are not set forth in other charters, but the results of making over virgin lands to the grantees can be easily visualised.

The Tippera Copper-plate grant of lord Lokanātha (A.D. 650) provides an important indication of a policy of reclaiming forest areas for cultivation in Eastern India. Lokanātha made an endowment of land in the forest region to more than one hundred brāhmaṇas, who were given joint and individual shares³. The boundaries of the land so granted were not defined, apparently because they had not been settled; only the limits of the district Suvvariga in which the forest region was situated were demarcated⁴. The forest area

1 *EI*, xviii, 75.

2 *Ibid.*, no 11, ll. 1-14. If *sāvaṭā* (l. 13,) read as such by N. K. Bhattasali, is emended into *savaṭā*, it would mean that the land (*bhūmi*) was full of trees, which would suit the context better.

3 *EI*, XV, no. 19, ll. 33-50.

4 *Ibid.*, ll. 27-33.

containing the endowed land is described as "having no distinction of natural and artificial, having a thick network of bush and creepers, where deer, buffaloes, bears, tigers, serpents, etc., enjoy, according to their will, all pleasures of home-life"¹. Obviously the brāhmaṇa community was brought there for the worship of the god Bhagavān Ananta-Nārāyaṇa installed in the *maṭha* made by a high-ranking feudatory brāhmaṇa, the *mahāsāmanta* Pradoṣaśarman², at whose intercession the grant seems to have been made. But the real significance of their advent lay in opening the forest area to cultivation and settlement. A similar process can be observed in some parts of Western India. The spurious Kaira plates of Vijayarāja, forged some time after the middle of the 6th century A.D., record shares granted to 63 brāhmaṇas in a village³; this naturally facilitated mass settlement of brāhmaṇas. Records of this type are not many, but these two broadly indicate the colonisation of barren and jungle areas through land grants to temples and brāhmaṇas.

The mode of agriculture in the settled areas, where many villages were given as *agrahāras* or benefices to brāhmaṇas, certainly marked an advance on what obtained in the forest region. Methods of cultivation may have differed from one settled area to the other, but the basic knowledge may have been common to all. While describing the Śrīkanṭha *janapada* in which Thanesar was situated, Bāṇa refers to the ploughing of the fields, the mounds of paddy on the threshing floor looking like artificial mountains, and the irrigation of the land through *ghaṭi*⁴ the main produce being *munga* (*mudga*) and wheat⁵. Obviously such methods of cultivation

1 Ibid, pp. 310-2.

2 Ibid, ll, 16-32.

3 *CH*, iv, no. 34.

4 P. 94. Is it the same as *arahaṭṭa* mentioned in the Cāhamāna inscriptions?

5 Ibid.

tion were known to the holders of *agrahāras*, who did not confine themselves only to religious and educational activities. In the course of his march Harṣa was welcomed by them with curd, molasses, and sugar in closed cases¹, which could not be produced in a forest village in the Vindhya area where people practised a primitive form of agriculture. According to the *Harṣacarita* the area which possessed black soil did not know the use of plough and oxen².

Anxious to eke out a living for their families the weak farmers worked hard with their spade and formed tiny plots of land³; arable fields were small in size and few in number⁴. They did not use any manure. Probably they practised the modern *jhum* type of cultivation in which the aborigines burn the forests and sow the reclaimed area when rain sets in, the burnt plants and trees acting as a kind of manure. Having harvested the crop they move on to another area and adopt the same method of agriculture there. Reference to the cutting of forests of the Vindhya region in the *Harṣacarita* might refer to this practice. Perhaps the same mode of cultivation may also have obtained in the forest region of Tippera, a part of which was settled with more than one hundred brāmaṇas. The settlers must have introduced there the new mode of cultivation superseding the one followed by the primitive peoples. Whether land grants helped to introduce better cultivation in the Vindhya region in the time of Harṣa is not known, but if some *agrahāras* were donated for the support of religious establishments in forest areas they may have been instrumental in diffusing there improved methods of cultivation.

Although epigraphic land grants give us a fair idea

1 P. 212.

2 Ibid., p. 227.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

of the fiscal and administrative concessions made to the grantees, they cannot be taken as a safe guide to the area donated to the temples and brāhmaṇas. Such statistics for the period with which we are dealing are wanting even in Europe; in India the position is all the more unsatisfactory. The extant epigraphic records would appear to be only a fragment of the original archives, if we bear in mind the natural and artificial ravages to which these records were subjected in Northern India. However, we can form some sort of vague, very general impression of the area held by the religious beneficiaries during the first half of the 7th century. We know that the monastery of Nālandā enjoyed the revenue of 200 villages; probably an equal number may have been attached to the centre of education at Valabhī. The extant copper-plates of Harṣa attest the grant of only two villages, but those of Valabhī in the corresponding period refer to the grant of at least 10 villages, and the Tippera Inscription of Lokanātha speaks of the grant of a forest region capable of supporting more than 100 brāhmaṇas. Bāṇa also throws some light on the extent of the religious grants. The *Harṣacarita* informs us that one hundred villages with 1000 *halas* (as much land as can be ploughed by 1000 ploughs)—roughly equal to 10,000 acres—in Madhyadeśa were granted to the brāhmaṇas by Harṣa on the eve of setting out on a military expedition¹. The *Kādambarī* refers to the scribes who were engaged in drafting thousands of *śāsanas* in the palace of Tārāpīḍā². If *śāsana* is taken here as a charter it would appear that numerous land grants were made to the brāhmaṇas. Besides, the *Harṣacarita* refers to the *agrahārikas*, both fake³ and genuine, although the number of villages held by them is not mentioned. Even allowing for an

1 *Harṣacarita*, p., 203.

2 *adhikaraṇa-lekhakair ālikhyamāna-śāsana-sahasram*, quoted in Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, p. 99, fn. I.

3 *mārga-grāma-nirgatair-āgrahārika-jālmaih*, p. 212.

element of exaggeration in Bāṇa's account of his patron and the description of the palace of Tārāpīḍa in the *Kādambarī*, his writings broadly reflect the state of affairs in the first half of the seventh century. All told it would seem that by the time of Harṣa the area of land in the occupation of the brāhmaṇas was considerable.

The terms of transfer show that generally plots of land were cultivated not by the brāhmaṇas but by temporary peasants. It seems that the number of independent and permanent peasant proprietors paying land tax directly to the king was falling off. Fa-hsien states that "only those who till the king's land pay a land tax", and that "they are free to go or stay as they please."¹ This probably excludes a large number of other people who did not pay land taxes to the state but to priests, temples, monasteries or other intermediaries. For in the succeeding paragraph Fa-hsien clarifies the position by stating that the monasteries are given fields and gardens with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.²

The period between the 5th and 7th centuries A.D. also witnessed the rise of landowning temples, the prototypes of later *maṭhas*. Although most grants were executed in favour of the brāhmaṇas, some were also made to the temples. We learn of two such endowments of land to a temple of the goddess Piṣṭapurī in Central India, during the first half of the 6th century A.D.³ In the second half of the same century a settled village in the Gayā District, "possessed of great wealth and enjoyment", was granted to the goddess Bhavānī by the Maukharī chieftain Anantavarman.⁴ In Bengal during the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. plots of land were granted respectively to the temples of Govindasvāmin,⁵ Śvetavarāhasvāmin⁶

1 Legge, *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, pp. 42-43.

2 Ibid., p. 43.

3 *CII*, iii, no. 25, ll. 14-15 ; no. 31, ll. 7-11.

4 Ibid., no. 50, l. 10.

5 *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 342 ff.

6 Ibid., pp. 338-9.

and Kokāmukhasvāmin.¹ An analysis of the grants dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, from the middle of the 3rd century A.D. to about A.D. 750, shows that of thirty-one grants two were made to Buddhist monasteries, three to Hindu temples, and the remainder twenty-six to brāhmaṇas.² Fa-hsien informs us that after the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha the kings, elders and lay Buddhists built monasteries for the monks and provided them with houses, gardens and fields, with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.³ The Chinese traveller records that the title-deeds inscribed on iron were handed down from king to king and were in force in his time. But this is probably an error on his part due to a faulty memory, for no iron-plates have been recovered as yet; obviously Fa-hsien meant copper.

An important factor that contributed to the rise and growth of landowning monastic institutions was the grant of *agrahāras* by the king for religious and educational purposes. The later Gupta king Dāmodara Gupta, who flourished in the sixth century A.D., is credited with the establishment of one hundred *agrahāras*,⁴ which would mean 100 villages granted to the brāhmaṇas for maintaining centres of religion and education out of the income derived from them. Such grants may also have been made by the Imperial Guptas, for the broken, illegible Bihar Stone Inscription of Skanda Gupta and the Bhitari Pillar Inscription supply a few instances.⁵ As late as the 7th-8th centuries the memory of the grants of *agrahāras* was fresh in the minds of the brāhmaṇas, who forged at least two grants of *agrahāras* attributed to Samudra Gupta.⁶ Fraudulent *agrahārikas*, who had no

1 *El*, xv, no. 7, ll. 6-7.

2 *CH*, iv, Introd., p. cxlix.

3 *Chinese Literature*, 1956, no. 3, 153.

4 *CH*, iii, no. 42, l. 10.

5 *Ibid.*, no. 12, ll. 24-30; no. 13, l. 18.

6 *Ibid.*, iii, no. 60; *El*, xxv, no. 9.

legal title to the grants, are also mentioned in the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa in the first half of the 7th century.¹ Hsüan Tsang informs us that the Nālandā *viḥāra* was maintained out of the revenues of about a hundred villages granted to this institution;² in the time of I-tsing this number seems to have risen to two hundred.³ As a result of the process of granting land these temples and monasteries developed as semi-independent areas enjoying immunities on religious grounds, and were gradually converted into mediaeval *maṭhas* rich enough to tempt the Turkish invaders.

The accounts of Fa-hsien and I-tsing leave no doubt that the monasteries got their lands cultivated by temporary tenants. I-tsing gives some idea about the nature of the tenure on which the cultivators were assigned land. He states that the *Saṅgha* provided the bulls and fields, and generally received one-sixth of the produce⁴. I-tsing does not indicate whether the cultivators were also provided with ploughs, seeds, manure and other equipment for agriculture. It seems that the tillers of the soil were not hired labourers receiving wages, as in former times, but were semi-serfs or temporary tenants paying rental to the landowners. If a temple or a monastery was the landowner, it had no payment to make to the state.

The law-books of the Gupta period show that similar arrangements were made in relation to secular holdings with the difference that the owner of the land was under the obligation of making some payment to the state. Kauṭilya provides that in new settlements land fit for cultivation should be given to the peasant by the king⁵, but Yājñavalkya lays down that land should be assigned

1 P. 212.

2 S. Beal, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsang*, p. 112.

3 J. Takakusu (tr.), *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, p. 65.

4 Ibid., p. 61.

5 *AS*, II. 1.

to the cultivator by the landowner (*kṣetrasvāmin*) and not by the king (*mahīpati*), who, of course, was entitled to the fruits of improvement made on the land in the case of the absence of the owner (*svāmin*)¹. From the comments of the *Mitākṣarā* and the *Vīramitrodaya* to Yājñavalkya, II. 158, it appears that there were four hierarchical stages comprising *mahīpati*, *kṣetrasvāmin*, *karṣaka* (cultivator), and the sub-tenant or hired labourer. We are not certain about the last stage during the Gupta period, but there can be no doubt about the existence of the first three. The law-book of Bṛhaspati², however, introduces the term *svāmin* in place of the term *kṣetrasvāmin* but makes it clear that the *svāmin* formed an intermediate stage between the *rājā* and the actual tiller of the soil. The *svāmin* owed this position to the practice of leasing out land by the owners to cultivators, who were liable to penalties if they neglected cultivation³. So these cultivators were in the nature of temporary tenants and not serfs.

These features of the organisation of agricultural production are corroborated by the epigraphic evidence. Land grants of the 4th to 6th centuries A.D. in Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarāt clearly establish that the recipient was given the right of enjoying the land, cultivating it or getting it cultivated on lease⁴. We have no means to determine the proportion of the brāhmaṇas who were actual cultivators, although their number may not have been inconsiderable, for the law-books of the period provide that brāhmaṇas might legitimately take to cultivation⁵. But where whole villages were granted to a few brāhmaṇas, obviously they could not cultivate all the land themselves, with the result that many

1. II. 157.

2. XIX. 54-55.

3. Yāj., II. 157-8; Bṛ., XIX. 19, 53-55.

4. *bhūñjātāḥ karṣātāḥ prādīśat karṣayātāḥ*. CH, iv, no. 2, l. 6; no. 11, l. 13; cf. no. 21, l. 32; *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 405, ll. 6-7 with fn. 2-3.

5. Mann, X. 81-82; Yāj., III. 35; Nār., I. 56-60.



brāhmaṇa villages or *agrahāras* became semi-feudal in character.

We have no evidence to show that peasants in the donated villages stood exactly in the same relation to brāhmaṇa landlords as peasants to their lords in English manorial villages, but in certain respects the peasant was completely subservient to the beneficiary. In many cases because of the right of getting their land cultivated by others the donees could replace old peasants by new ; thus they might oust their tenants¹.

The grants of the Gupta period from Central India show that the peasants had to render labour service (*viṣṭi*) to their king². The Vākāṭaka and some other Central Indian grants made by the feudatories of the Guptas state that villages granted to religious donees were made free from the imposition forced of labour³. A Rāṣṭrakūṭa copper-plate of the 5th century from Mahārāṣṭra mentions the grant of an *āgrahāra* free from all types of *ḍitya* and *viṣṭi*⁴. Similar grants were made in Western India, one of the earliest being that of 457⁵. This might imply that the beneficiaries were exempted from giving to the king any taxes and supplying any labour service which they could obviously realise from the village held by them. Some grants from Central and Western India enjoin the inhabitants to obey the command of the donees, which has been taken to mean that the donees could commandeer impressed labour⁶. But whether they could demand what was not customary is doubtful. At any rate it is clear that the ruling chiefs

1 *CH*, iv, Introd., p. clxxi.

2 These grants have been enumerated in Maity, *The Economic Life of Northern India in Gupta Period*, pp. 152-3. The grants of Pravarasena II use the term *sarva-viṣṭi*.

3 *Ibid*.

4 M. G. Dikshit (ed.), *Selected Inscriptions from Maharashtra*, p. 8.

5 *CH*, iv, no. 8, l. 6.

6 Maity, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-3.

exacted labour service in the Gupta period in Central and Western India.

What is implied in some Gupta land charters regarding the donee's right to forced labour is made explicit in the grants of the rulers of Valabhī from the last quarter of the 6th century A.D. A grant of Dharasena I (of about 575) confers on the religious grantee the right to impose forced labour as occasion might arise¹. Exactly the same concession is granted by Śilāditya I in his charters of 605² and of 610-11³. From the second half of the 7th century the technical term conveying the donee's right to forced labour is frequently mentioned in the Valabhī grants⁴ and even in grants made by lesser chiefs such as the Sendraka chief Allaśakti (656) of Gujarāt⁵; it also occurs in the land charters of the Cālukyas of Bādāmi. It is clear that backed by such a right the grantees could determine the occasion for forced labour at their discretion.

✓Forced labour was also imposed upon the artisans. The early law-books required the artisans to work for a day in a month for the king in lieu of taxes. This cannot be taken as forced labour although the *karmakaras* considered identical with such labour by Kauṭilya may have included artisans. But a charter granted to a group of merchants (*vaṇig-grāma*) in Western India in A.D. 592 shows that impressed labour had to be performed by the artisans not only for the king but also for such merchants as were granted the royal charter of immunity. Thus the blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, potters, etc., are to be subjected to corvée by the merchants acting as elders

1 *El*, xi., 80.

2 *IA*, vi, p. 12, l. 6. The phrase used is *s-otapadyamāna-viṣṭi*, which is translated by Mirashi as "with the right to forced labour arising therefrom" (*CII* iv, 89).

3 *El*, xi, no. 17, l. 26.

4 *Ibid.*, xxi, no. 18, l. 25.

5 *CII*, iv, no. 21, l. 27; *IA*, vi, 12.

(*vārika*).¹ The workers engaged in pressing sugar and those at indigo vats are exempted from forced labour, apparently for the king,² because their establishments are taxed.³ Further, water-porters and milkmen, apparently working for the merchants, are not to be apprehended for free labour for the sake of the king.⁴ Evidently the object of these concessions granted to the *vaṇig-grāma* was to reserve the service of the artisans and unskilled workers for the merchants, a feature typical of the closed economy of mediaeval times.

On the whole the nature of forced labour changed in Gupta times. In the Maurya period it covered *dāsas* and *karmakaras*, who along with cleaners, measurers, guards, weighers, supervisors of grinding, etc., all engaged in working in the store-house, constituted the class that provided the labour force.⁵ This labour was recruited by some supervisor (*viṣṭibandhaka*) and was paid.⁶ It is true that *viṣṭi* was a source of income to the state, but it is doubtful whether it was imposed on the independent peasantry living in the villages. But it covered all the subjects of Rudradāman in Western India in the second century A.D. More radical changes appeared in the 4th-7th centuries. First, as the Vākāṭaka, Rāṣṭrakūṭa, and Cālukya records indicate, the practice had extended to the western part of Central India, Mahārāṣṭra and parts of Karnaṭaka. Second, forced labour assumed a wide magnitude in Central India, where it came to be known by the term *sarva-viṣṭi*.⁷ Some grants from Western

1 In translating *EI*, xxx, no. 30, l. 28, Kosambi (*JESHO*, ii, 28) suggests that these artisans had to render forced labour in lieu of taxes, but this can be accepted only if the *vārikas* are taken as royal officers which is not correct.

2 *EI*, xxx, no. 30, l. 8.

3 *JESHO*, ii, 287.

4 *EI*, xxx, no. 30, l. 8.

5 *AS*, II, 15.

6 *Ibid.*, V, 3.

7 *EI*, xxiv, no. 10, l. 23. The term is commonly used in the grants of Pravarasena II.

India of the 4th and 5th centuries, dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, use the term *sarva-ditya-viṣṭi*², which means all varieties of dues and forced labour. Third, the right formerly confined to the king was now extended to religious donees and their descendants villages granted to whom had not to render any forced labour to the king. Fourth, the scope of forced labour was widened. The various kinds of work done by means of *viṣṭi* are enumerated by Kauṭilya, who mentions weighing, measuring, supervision of grinding etc. in this connection, but he does not speak here of cultivation or purely agricultural work. The use of forced labour for agriculture is clearly indicated by the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana, according to whom such labour was used not for the services of the king but for those of the village headman. The text suggests that in Gupta and post-Gupta times labour services were appropriated by the village headman for his comforts. (According to it peasant women were compelled to perform unpaid work of various kinds, such as filling up the granaries of the village headman, taking things into or out of his house, clearing or decorating his residence, working in his fields, and spinning yarn of cotton, wool, flax or hemp for his clothes.³) Since the geographical knowledge of Vātsyāyana⁴ and the nature of products mentioned by him apply to Central and Western India, it is fair to assume that those physical services were exacted by the village heads who were the representatives of royal power in the countryside of those areas.⁵ In our opinion

1 Ibid.

2 V. 5. 5.

3 H. C. Chakladar thinks that he belonged to south-western India.

4 A passage from the charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa granted to a *vaṇig-grāma* in A.D. 592 (*El*, xxx, no. 30. 1.) declares that peasants coming to the market town from their own area at the beginning of rains for the purchase of seed are not to be seized by the lord (*svāmin*), which implies that peasants were held arbitrarily by the lord for impressed labour, probably in his fields at any time and any place.

the inclusion of working in the fields of the headman in the list of labour services catalogued here marks the beginning of an important fendal practice, which would be all the more pervasive in villages transferred to the donees with the right to labour service. They would not fail to make wide and effective use of it, especially in bringing barren land under cultivation, for they enjoyed the power of cultivating the land or getting it cultivated; none the less it probably bore heavily upon the peasants.

While the peasants under the donees and *kṣetrasvāmins* were reduced to a servile position, the free peasants lost in status because of the imposition of several new taxes, which can be compared to feudal dues in Europe. It seems that during the Gupta period the villages had to pay forced contributions of money or supplies to royal troops and officials when they halted at or passed through the village¹, which can be likened to the tax known as *senābhakta* in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya². Further, they had to furnish cattle in relays for transport³. They were also under the obligation of supplying flowers and milk to the royal officers on tour⁴. These forced contributions were designed to meet the needs of the army and the state. The practice of realising contributions which were not sent to the state treasury but were consumed locally by royal troops and officers tended to set them up as another class of intermediaries and thus to lower the position of the free peasantry.

The incidence of labour services and forced contributions would not be much felt under the direct jurisdiction of the royal representatives who were mobile and not hereditary, but it could be rendered oppressive by the donees who were men on the spot with a hereditary, vested interest in the exploitation of the resources

1 *a-bhāṭa-echūtra-prāveśya*, CII, iii, p. 98, fn. 2.

2 *AS*, II, 15.

3 *a-pārampara-go-baliwardda*, EI, xxvii, no. 16, l. 29.

4 Ibid.



of the village. This kind of labour service reminds us of the European feudal practice according to which the tenants had to carry out two obligations: (i) payment of rents and (ii) furnishing labour services for cultivation of the portion of land reserved for direct farming by the master.¹ In Gupta and post-Gupta times these obligations were performed towards the donees in Central and Western India, but the practice was hardly different from what we find in Europe.

The judicial and administrative authority which the donees enjoyed must have added to their economic power over the inhabitants of the village. Hence in some respects the beneficiaries of grants may be compared to the feudal lords of the manors. But in other respects the position was different. Probably those who were subjected to forced labour were not compelled to work on the fields of the grantees to the same extent as peasants in mediaeval European manors. Furthermore, the area of land under the direct cultivation of the grantee was limited, for we hardly hear of the grant of more than a village at a time to the brāhmaṇas.² Consequently there was little occasion for such work, and its scope was probably restricted.

What mainly led to the servitude of the peasants was their transfer to the beneficiaries. Fa-hsien clearly states that monasteries built for the monks were furnished with houses, gardens and fields, with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.³ But the earliest epigraphic reference to the transfer of peasants to a monastery is not older than the 7th century. The Ashrafpur grants from East Bengal mention the persons who were in the enjoyment of a plot⁴ and name the

1 Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, p. 173.

2 In a grant of A.D. 533-4, however, two villages were granted by a private donor for the purposes of a temple (*CII*, iii, no. 31, l. 7.).

3 *Chinese Literature*, 1956, no. 3, 153.

4 *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, i, no. 6, p. 90, Plate A, l. 8.

cultivators who were tilling it¹. They indicate that while the plot was taken away from the enjoyers and given to the Buddhist monastery headed by the preceptor Saṃghamitra, the cultivators were left undisturbed, for the monastery would have to get its land cultivated by some peasants. They also show that another field cultivated by two persons was given to the same recipient².

According to the epigraphs the practice of transferring peasants began in South India. A Pallava land grant of the 3rd century A.D. informs us that four sharecroppers remained attached to a plot of which land was given away to the brāhmaṇas³, which implies that original cultivators were required to work on the land even when it was made over to the beneficiary. Again, a Prākṛt grant of the Śālaṅkāyana Vijayadevavarman from Ellore in the Godavari District records an endowment to a brāhmaṇa of 20 nivartanas of land together with a house-site (*gharatthānam*) for men who receive half the crop and a house-site for the doorkeeper or the guard⁴. These two instances suggest that the sharecroppers and labourers who were attached to the fields were compelled to stick to them. Gradually the practice came to embrace peasants, who seem to have been given away to the donees in Karṇāṭaka. A grant of the sixth century from the Bijapur District⁵ issued by an early Cālukya king of Bādāmi donates twenty-five *nivartanas* of land along with all its produce, garden-cultivation, *jīraka*, water, and house (*niveśa*)⁶. Apparently the term *niveśa* stands here for cottages in which the peasants lived. This is supported by a Gaṅga grant of

1 Ibid., ll. 8-9

2 Ibid., Plate, B, ll. 9-11.

3 *EI*, i, no. 1. 1-39.

4 Ibid., ix, no. 7, ll. 4-13.

5 *EI*, xxviii, 59.

6 Ibid., no. 10.

about the same century from the Ganjām District¹. It states that six *halas* of land along with four cottages (*catur-niveśana-sahitā*) were constituted into an *agrahāra* and granted free of taxes in perpetuity to god Nārāyaṇa². In both the grants the term *niveśa* or *niveśana* is used not merely in the sense of house or house-site but in the sense of peasants living therein, as is still done in popular parlance in the countryside. From South India the practice of the transfer of individual peasants probably spread to Central India, A Vākāṭaka grant of the fifth century speaks of the gift of four houses meant for the use of cultivators (*karṣaka-niveśanāni*)³, which implies the making over of cultivators to the beneficiary.

The practice of transferring all the cultivators of the village to the beneficiary can be traced back to the sixth century A.D. in Orissa and the adjacent areas of Central India. An inscription from the Koraput District assignable to that century⁴ advises the inhabitants of a village, cultivating land therein and assured of their livelihood, to continue to live in the village, which is made over to the brāhmaṇas⁵. This implies that the cultivators are counselled to stick to the soil transferred to the recipient, although the fact that the village is transferred along with its inhabitants is not stated in so many words in the grant. Again, grants

1 Ibid., xxiii, 62-3.

2 Ibid. no. 10, ll. 10-17. The terms *hala* seems to denote as much land as can be maintained under cultivation by a farmer possessing a pair of oxen, which would make it equal to 10-12 acres of land. This fits in with the transfer of 4 houses along with 6 *halas* of land, for four families of ploughmen could well manage 60-70 acres of land.

3 V. V. Mirashi, *Vākāṭak Rājvaṃś kā Itihāś tathā Abhilekh*, no. 8, ll. 14-16.

4 *El*, xxviii, 12.

5 *El*, xxviii, no. 2, ll. 6-7; *yataḥ bhavadbhi (s-ca) dhruva-karmmānt-ārambhaeḥ (mbhaiḥ) sunivṛta-viśvastair-vvastavya (ṃ)*. D. C. Sircar (Ibid., 5) interprets the passage to mean that cultivators are advised to work on lands settled with them and to live happily without molestation, but this is not a happy rendering.

from the eastern part of Central India ask the cultivators residing in the donated villages to pay taxes to the beneficiaries, carry out their orders and to live in happiness¹. The term 'in happiness' sounds a little incongruous in the context of the fiscal and administrative privileges with which the beneficiaries were armed, but the whole instruction implies that the people were advised to stick to their village. These pious sermons, however, did not always work, and hence an element of coercion had to be introduced in those areas where it was necessary to retain the services of artisans and peasants.

The charters of the Maitrakas and Cālukyas of Gujarāt imply the transfer of peasants along with the soil. The earliest instance can be referred to the second half of the sixth century, when the Valabhī ruler Dharasena II records the gift of plots of varying size held by five persons one of whom is called *mahattara* and another *kuṭumbin*². Probably along with the plots their holders changed hands otherwise there was no point in mentioning their names. Again, a charter of the Valabhī ruler Dharasena III, dated A.D. 623-4, grants four plots of cultivated land of varying size held respectively by four cultivators or *kuṭumbins* who are named in the grant. These fields were well defined and lay in the midst of plots held by other peasants³, among whom an element of serfdom was introduced. That the peasants attached to the soil were transferred can also be inferred from the Navsari plates of an early Gurjara ruler of Gujarāt, Jayabhaṭa III (A.D. 706). This king bestowed a large field of 64 *nivartanas* on a brāhmaṇa along with its houses, and its immovable and movable property (*gṛha-sthāvara-calaka*)⁴, which suggests that the householders

1 *CII*, iii, no. 40, ll. 11-13 ; no. 41, ll. 13-15.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 38, ll. 21-8.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *CII*, iv, no. 21, ll. 17-28.

living on this field were also made over along with the portions of land. The three instances concern the gift of fields and not of villages. The earliest grant which unequivocally transfers the villagers to the grantee is that of a feudatory ruler called the *mahārāja* Samudrasena, ascribable to the 7th century A.D.¹. According to it a village in the Kāngra area is made over to the grantee with its inhabitants (*sa-prativāsi-jana-sameta*)². Thus some parts of Kāngra and Gujarāt experienced serfdom during the 6th and 7th centuries.

Serfdom seems to have been a feature of the transfer of those pieces of land which did not form part of organised villages but were held independently by peasant families having their habitation, not in a cluster of dwellings but in isolated houses. In such a case all the land the peasant cultivated lay round his house. When it was donated peasants working on it had to be retained otherwise the donee would be put to a great difficulty. Some of these peasants were probably ploughmen cultivating for the sake of the donor. It is therefore possible to think of two kinds of serfs—those who possibly served as ploughmen and those who served as tenants living in villages. The latter paid a part of their produce as rent and fulfilled the obligations laid down in the charter. In the Indian context the ploughmen attached to the ground should be regarded as full-fledged serfs, while the tenants specifically transferred along with the villages may be taken as semi-serfs. The latter did not have to work on the private farms of the beneficiaries, although under difficult economic situations they could not leave the village to seek means of subsistence elsewhere.

Epigraphic records suggest that serfdom began in the peripheral areas and then gradually spread to the heart of the country in Northern India; it originated

1 Ibid., 287.

2 Ibid., no. 80, l. 10.



in mountainous or backward regions which did not have too many peasants to run the local economy, but because of the powers it gave to the grantees over the cultivators it later spread to developed areas; it began with the sharecroppers and then it covered the peasants in general; finally it began with plots of land and then it came to embrace whole villages. By the middle of the 8th century serfdom became fairly common, as is attested by the following extracts from a Chinese account of A.D. 732¹.

"According to the law of the Five Indies, from the king, the royal consort and the princes down to the chiefs and their wives all build monasteries separately in accordance with their respective capacities and abilities. Each of them builds his own temple, but does not construct it jointly. They say when each person has one's own meritorious virtues, what is the necessity of joint effort?

Whenever a monastery is built, village and its folk are immediately offered to support the Three Precious Ones. Merely building a monastery without making any donation of a village and its folk is not done. This is followed as an example by the foreign countries. The king, the queen and royal consorts have their respective village and their folk. The princes and chiefs also have their respective village and their folk. Donation is free and the king is not asked for that. This also applied in case of building a temple. When it is necessary to build a temple they build it and the king is not asked. The king dare not obstruct; he is afraid lest it should infect him with sins.

As to rich commoners, though they have no village to donate, they try their best to build temples and

1 Jan Yun-Hua, "Hui Chao's Record on Kashmir", *Kashmir Research Biannual*, no. 2 (1962), pp. 119-120.



manage these by themselves. Whenever they obtain things, they offer them to the 'Three Precious Ones. As in the Five Indians, no human being is sold; so there are no female slaves. Villages and their inhabitants could be donated if wanted and necessary."

The present account shows that the practice of donating villages along with their inhabitants to the monasteries by kings, queens, princes and chiefs was as common as that of building them by these dignitaries. There was no dearth of donations because not only the kings and queens but also the princes and chiefs possessed their own villages and village folk whom they could dispose of freely. Princes and lesser chiefs probably received grants for their maintenance from their superior lord, but were apparently free to make a religious gift of their land with the men working on it. Obviously the inhabitants were bound to serve the donors as long as they lived under them and to serve the beneficiaries when they were transferred to the latter.

This Chinese account establishes a significant link between the breakdown of slavery and emergence of serfdom. Speaking of donations to the Buddhist monasteries it points out that human beings are not sold in the Five Indies, and adds that there are no female slaves. Although the statement reminds us of the one made by Megasthenes that there were no slaves in India, it implies that there were some male slaves in the 7th century. But the absence of slavery in general did not raise any difficulty, because, "villages and their inhabitants could be donated if wanted and necessary." Since inhabitants were transferred to the monasteries for cultivating the villages granted to them, the beneficiaries did not experience the lack of labour power.

There are some indications that from the Gupta period the number of slaves engaged in production

declined, and the śūdras became increasingly free from the obligation to serve as slaves. Kauṭilya's provisions for manumission of slaves generally apply to those who are born of Āryan parents or are Āryans themselves¹. But Yājñavalkya introduces a revolutionary principle when he asserts that nobody can be reduced to slavery without his consent². According to a later commentary this means that a śūdra, a kṣatriya or vaiśya employed in servile work against his will shall be released by the king³. Thus Yājñavalkya completely reverses Manu's precept, which provides for the forcible enslavement of a śūdra⁴. Further, Nārada and Bṛhaspati strongly deprecate the attitude of the wretch who, being independent, sells himself⁵. Besides this, for the first time Nārada lays down detailed ceremonies for the emancipation of slaves⁶. A passage of Kātyāyana implies that the slaves had some sort of organization, for their leaders were known as *vargins*⁷. All these causes may have undermined the institution of slavery.

A significant factor which contributed to this development was the fragmentation of land through the process of partition and gift. The earlier laws of inheritance, including those in the law-book of Manu and even in that of Yājñavalkya, never refer to the partition of landed property, which is mentioned for the first time in the codes of Nārada⁸ and Bṛhaspati.⁹ This may suggest that in the middle or towards the end of the

1 *AS*, III. 13.

2 II. 182.

3 Colebrooke, *Miscellaneous Essays*, ii, 23.

4 But *Kātyā*, v. 722, repeats the dictum of Manu.

5 *Nār*, V. 37 ; *Bṛ*, XV. 23. Cf. Kane, *HDS*, ii, 182.

6 V. 42-43. Cf. rules of manumission in *Kātyā*, v. 75. *Nār.*, however, adds that certain classes of slaves cannot be emancipated (v. 29) except by the favour of the owner.

7 *Kātyā*, v. 350.

8 XIII. 38.

9 XXV. 10. 28, 43, 53 and 64.

Gupta period large joint families, owning large stretches of land, began to break into smaller units. Once the principle of the partition of land was recognised, the increasing density of population in the fertile river valleys of Northern India, after the earlier phases of settlement, was bound to accelerate the pace of the fragmentation of arable plots of land. The pressure of population on land is indicated by an epigraphic record of the 5th century A.D., which shows that in Northern Bengal even $1\frac{1}{2}$ *kulyavāpa* of land had to be purchased in smaller plots at four different places.¹ This purchase was made for the purpose of making gifts, which further helped the process of fragmentation.

There was some restriction on making gifts by private individuals. The Bengal inscriptions show that no sale transactions made for the purposes of gifts could be effected without the consent of the local representatives of the king and the district council. The Mahārāṣṭra inscriptions also show that gifts of land could not be made by individuals without the consent of the state. But ordinarily in both cases such consent was not withheld, with the result that villages and plots of land were granted not only by the king and his feudatories but also by private individuals.

We no longer hear of large plots of 500 *karīśas*, or of the state farms of the Maurya period. Epigraphic references to fields of one *kulyavāpa* or of 4, $2\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{1}{2}$ *droṇavāpas*² do not suggest big plots. According to Pargiter a *kulyavāpa* was a little larger than an acre.³ But if the *kulyavāpa* measure of land prevalent in the Cachār District of Assam be considered identical with the *kulyavāpa*,⁴ the area of the latter would be thirteen acres. Since

1 *El*, xx, no. 5, ll. 5-11.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *IA*, xxxix, 215-16.

4 *Hist. of Bengal*, i, 652. S. K. Maity holds that the *kulyavāpa* was between 14.4 and 17.6 acres. *JESHO*, i, 98-107.

one *kulya* is equal to eight *droṇas*, on this basis a *droṇavāpa* will be even less than two acres. During the same period a survey of the land grants made by the Maitraka rulers of Valabhī in Gujarāt shows that the average plot of land did not exceed two or three acres in size.¹ Naturally smaller holdings made it uneconomical to employ a large number of slaves and labourers. While some may have been engaged in twos or threes, others may have been dispensed with.

The traditional view that the *vaiśyas* were peasants recurs in the literature of post-Maurya and Gupta times.² In the *Amarakośa* words for cultivators are listed in the *vaiśya-varga* (section).³ But there is some reason to believe that *śūdras* were also becoming peasants in good numbers. Several law-books show that land was rented out to the *śūdra* for half the crop.⁴ This would suggest that the practice of granting land to *śūdra* sharecroppers was growing more common. A Pallava land grant of about A.D. 250-350 informs us that four sharecroppers (*ārdhikaḥ*) remained attached to the land even when it was given away to the *brāhmaṇas*⁵; it is likely that these were *śūdras*.

Nārada includes the *kīnāśa* (peasant) among those who are not fit to be examined as witnesses.⁶ A commentator of the 7th century A.D.⁷ explains this term as a *śūdra*⁸, which shows that peasants were thought of as *śūdras*. Bṛhaspati provides very severe corporal punishment for the *śūdra* who acts as a leader in boundary disputes relating to fields⁹, which again suggests that such

1 K. J. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*, pp. 246-7, 267 ff.

2 *Śānti Parva*, 60, 24-26, 92, 2.

3 II. 9. 6.

4 *Manu*, IV, 253; *Viṣṇu*, LVII. 16; *Yāj.*, I. 166.

5 *EI*, i, no. I, 1. 39.

6 I. 181.

7 *HCIP*, iii, 299.

8 Asahāya's comm. to *Nār.*, I. 181.

9 XIX. 6.

śūdras were owners of fields. Finally, Hsüan Tsang describes the śūdras as a class of agriculturists¹, a description which is confirmed by the *Narasimha Purāṇa*² compiled before the 10th century A.D. Thus this significant development, which began from Gupta times, covered all the śūdras by the first half of the 7th century A.D. The view that the farmer population was largely composed of śūdras³ seems to be more true of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods than of earlier times. Thus from the point of view of the rise of feudalism the transformation of śūdras from the position of slaves and hired labourers into that of agriculturists should be regarded as a factor of great significance.

It seems that śūdra peasants did not take kindly to the grants made to the brāhmaṇas. A grant of the middle of the 6th century A.D. from the District of Gaya lays down that it should be protected from the hands of the śūdras, as can be inferred from the phrase *śūdrakare[a]d-rakṣu[a]ṇaḥ* used there.⁴ As usual the donor instructs his descendants as well as others not to interfere with or disturb the grantee, but what is unique he also points out the necessity of protecting the grant from the śūdras. Thus in this case danger to the grant was apprehended from both above and below. Since the crucial expression is not found in any later grant, it seems that gradually the idea of spiritual merit accruing from religious grants was propagated among the peasants who thus became reconciled to them.

(Feudal developments in mediaeval Europe were characterised by the rise of independent, self-sufficient

1 Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, i, 168.

2 58. 10-15.

3 *CHI*, i, 268.

4 *JASB*, NS v (1909), 164. In editing the Amauna Plate of the mahārāja Nandana (*EI*, x, no. 10) T. Bloch construes the phrase as *sudrakentkirnam* (l. 8), but this is not warranted by the impression produced there; the reading is clearly *śūdrakare-d-rakṣuṇaḥ*, which of course is incorrect Sanskrit.

economic units, which also arose in India as the result of land grants and certain other factors. The beneficiaries enjoyed several economic rights which cut the economic ties between the central authority and the donated areas. For the continuity and development of their economy they were more dependent on the local artisans and cultivators than on the officials of the central government. The beneficiaries were entitled to all kinds of local dues, a part of which they must have invested in local undertakings. The main idea behind tying down the peasants to the fields they cultivated was to preserve the self-sufficient village economy, which was maintained in South Bihar through other ways. The two spurious copper-plates of Samudra Gupta, assignable to the 7/8th century, required the donee (*agrahārika*) not to introduce any tax-paying peasants and artisans from another village into the gift villages.¹ Exempt from various royal taxes and impositions, these villages were a standing temptation to the neighbouring villagers, who naturally wanted to migrate to the *agrahāras*. But if such an exodus was tolerated, it would not only deprive the state of revenues but also disturb the existing economy of the village from which they migrated. Hence such a restriction served to maintain the self-sufficient economy of the villages.

The conditions obtaining in the villages which were independent of the beneficiaries of land grants and were placed under the charge of the village headman were not very dissimilar. We have already seen that the headman, according to the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana, might compel peasant women not only to work in his fields but also to spin yarn, so that his clothes might be supplied to him locally². Some of the commodities thus produced were also put on sale, apparently to cater for

1 *CII*, iii, no. 60, ll. 12-13.

2 *V.* 5. 5.



the simple needs of the villagers¹. So the Maurya state regulation of trade and industries was giving way to the management of these affairs by the chiefs of local economic units, independent of the central control.

That such local units were coming into existence is also evident from the paucity of coins of common use from the Gupta period onwards. This factor can be linked up, on the one hand, with the decline of internal trade and the consequent necessity of producing local commodities to meet local needs² and, on the other, with the weakening of the power of the centre, which gradually adopted the method of paying officials by grants of revenues or in kind. While the Indo-Bactrians, and especially the Kuṣāṇas, issued a considerable number of copper coins, which were evidently in common use in the Punjab, and occasionally are found even as far east as Buxar in Bihar, the Gupta emperors, other than Kumāra Gupta, issued only a few copper coins. Thus Fa-hsien seems to have been correct when he stated that cowries formed the common medium of exchange. Even allowing for the fact that copper is more susceptible to corrosion than more precious metals, the comparative rarity of Gupta copper coins suggests that money economy was becoming weaker at this time.

It is indicative of the growing disuse of coins in post-Gupta times that the religious endowments which were made in cash by the princes and individuals in the first two centuries of the Christian era were now partly replaced by grants of land. In the earlier period the Sātavāhana rulers made a few land grants, but no such grants can be attributed to the Kuṣāṇas in whose dominions as well as in those of the Sātavāhanas cash

1 Ibid.

2 The colonising and largescale commercial activities during the early mediaeval period were confined to the enterprising people of the coastal area, and do not seem to have brought any substantial change in the economy of the interior.

grants were made to the guilds of artisans and merchants for using them for religious purposes. Further, in the post-Harṣa period hardly any coin can be ascribed with certainty to any ruling house. The only dynasty of the period to which some coins have been attributed is that of the Maitrakas of Valabhī. But according to a careful study they can be regarded only as "so-called" Valabhī coins, for they really belong to Gupta times and are clearly comparable to Gupta coins¹. Of course legal texts refer to the use of coins, land charters mention taxes levied in *hiranya*, and some inscriptions speak of the cost of construction and purchase in terms of money, but very few actual finds can be ascribed to this period. In fact the absence of coins during the period 600-900 has been noted by several scholars². It is not possible to make much of references to coins in literary sources, for a recent study shows that most of these sources belong to the period following the 10th century³. It is therefore evident that coins in general became rarer from the time of Harṣavardhana onwards, which leads us to the conclusion that trade suffered a decline and urban life began to disappear, a feature which can be compared with a similar development in Iran.

A recent study of trade and commerce in Gupta times shows that the decline of the Roman empire and the Persian rivalry with the Byzantine empire rendered the volume of Indian trade apparently less than in the first century A.D., when Pliny complains of the heavy drainage of Roman money for Indian merchandise.⁴ One of the two most important articles of this trade was silk exported by India through Persian merchants,

1 This view has been communicated to me by Dr. P. L. Gupta.

2 C. J. Brown, *The Coins of India*, p. 50, cf. p. 55.

3 Important literary sources have been mentioned by L. Gopal in his article in *JNSI*, xxv, pt. I.

4 S. K. Maity, *The Economic Life of Northern India in Gupta Period*, p. 139.



the other being the spices.¹ Trade in silk was so important in the Byzantine empire that in order to regulate silk prices all over the country Justinian (527-565) enacted that one pound of silk should not cost more than eight pieces of gold, and that all the wealth of one who violated this law should be confiscated.² To further check the drainage of his country's wealth on account of the exorbitant prices paid for silk to the Persian merchants, he proposed to the Ethiopians that they should buy silk from India and sell it to the Romans, for they would thereby gain much profit for themselves and assist the Romans by saving them from having to pay their money to the Persians,³ who were the rivals of the Byzantine empire. But the Ethiopians found it impossible to buy the required silk from the Indians, as the Persian merchants in the harbours farther to the east, where the Indian ships first put in, bought up whole cargoes thereby monopolising the entire supply.⁴ It is evident from this that in the first half of the 6th century silk was as good an earner of bullion for India as spices in the first century. The drainage of gold from the Roman empire in the first century A.D. was stopped by means of legislation, which, though supplemented by diplomacy, failed to check it in the Byzantine empire. The solution was found in 551 by the introduction of silk-worms brought into the Byzantine empire secretly overland from China.⁵ It may have taken another fifty years to get the art of rearing silkworms spread in Byzantium, and by the end of the sixth century A.D. the problem of obtaining silk from the East may have been finally solved for the Byzantine

1 Ibid., pp. 136-8.

2 Ibid., p. 137.

3 Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia* p. 46.

4 Ibid., pp. 46-7.

5 Ibid., p. 47.

empire. This adversely affected Indian foreign trade, which so far as north India is concerned was confined to silk. Evidently the stoppage of its export to the Byzantine empire drastically reduced whatever remained of the shrunken foreign commerce of North-Western India in Gupta times. Hence so long as some new articles did not take the place of silk there was no means to restore the balance, and retrogression in foreign trade was inevitable.

The decline of foreign trade may also have been caused by the expansion of the Arabs under the banner of Islam. The agitated state of Western Asia, Egypt and Eastern Europe, at least in the initial stage of the Arab conquests, was bound to tell upon India's foreign trade with the countries lying to the west. As we shall see later, only when the Arabs had settled down as rulers in these countries and Sind, did trade revive from the third century of the Hijri era. But meanwhile there was nothing to arrest its decline. Thus we have clear indications of the decline of the foreign commerce of North-Western India from the end of the Gupta period, and especially from the first half of the 7th century A.D.

To what extent the loss on account of trade with the Byzantine empire was made up by the diversion of Indian trade with China in the century following the fall of the Gupta empire is difficult to determine. A Chinese account of the 9th-10th centuries refers to the presence of Indian merchants in China and Chinese merchants in India in the 7th century A.D.¹, but commerce seems to have been confined to luxury articles and the use of cowries in internal transactions referred to by this Chinese account could not have helped foreign trade.

Whatever internal trade and commerce existed had to be fitted into the emerging feudal structure. This is

¹ N. C. Sen, *Accounts of India and Kashmir in the Dynastic Histories of the T'ang Period* to be published by Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan.

evident from the detailed rules laid down in the law-books regarding the functioning of the corporate bodies of artisans and traders. It is symptomatic of the declining central authority that the king is required not only to observe the laws of the guilds but also to enforce them. Br̥haspati enjoins the king to approve of whatever is done by the heads of the guilds whether harsh or kind towards other people¹.

What actually prevailed can be inferred from three charters, ranging from the end of the 6th century A.D. to the beginning of the 8th century A.D., granted to the guilds of merchants by the rulers of the coastal areas of Western India. The earliest charter, first translated by D. C. Sircar², and later translated and commented upon by D. D. Kosambi³, throws considerable light on the nature of commodities handled by the merchants. It speaks of the trade in wine, sugar, indigo, ginger, oil, textiles, articles in wood, iron and leather, etc.⁴. Here the state regulates prices and checks weights and measures⁵, but its control of trade and commerce is not as rigid as prescribed by Kauṭilya. On the whole the corporation of merchants is allowed a large measure of autonomy. Exempted from various kinds of dues the traders are left free to deal with their labourers, herdsmen, etc.⁶. They are also empowered to exact forced labour from the blacksmiths, weavers, barbers, potters and other artisans⁷. (But the guilds of traders are not permitted to compete with one another, for they cannot congregate in the same market⁸.) Of course

1 Br., XVII. 18.

2 EI, xxx, 163-81.

3 JESHO, ii, 281-93.

4 Ibid., 285.

5 EI, xxx, no. 30, l. 10.

6 Ibid., l. 8.

7 Ibid., l. 28.

8 By *sarova-sreṇinām-ek-āpanako na deyaḥ* (EI. XXX, no. 30, l. 6) Kosambi (JESHO, ii, 286) means that all guilds are not to pay the single-

some artisans-cum-merchants are required to supply commodities to the state at half the usual rate at which they are sold to ordinary customers¹, and others are asked to render corvée in lieu of taxes. Besides, the traders are required to pay to the state a number of frontier taxes, customs and sales tax, but in return they are allowed immunity from the entry of royal officials in their area and the payment of dues and rations for supporting royal officials². The state also abandons the power of escheating the property of a souless merchant, a right given to it by the law-book of Bṛahaspati and exercised by it as known from the *Śākuntalam*. The privileges conceded to the *vaṇig-grāma* remind us of their counterparts granted to temples and brāhmaṇas from the early centuries of the Christian era and clearly show the rise of autonomous economic units in the coastal areas.

We do not have any charter of this kind in the 7th century A.D., but the two charters issued by Bhogaśakti, the Cālukya king of the Koṅkaṇ area, in the beginning of the 8th century A.D. make it clear that the guilds of the merchants had gained in importance. They were free to manage their affairs. In one case eight villages and money granted to the temple were to be managed by the local merchants in groups of 5 or 10 who were instructed to supervise annual religious processions and were exempted from payment of tolls and rations for royal officers³; in another case a deserted town was re-settled and granted along with three neighbouring villages to two marchants who were assigned a kind of municipal charter. These merchants were exempted from tolls throughout the kingdom of Bhogaśakti in

market-tax, but the construction of the following passage *sarveśreṇibhiḥ khovā (?)-dānam na dātavyam* does not warrant this interpretation.

1 *EI*, XXX, no. 30, l. 28.

2 *Ibid.*, l. 6.

3 *CH*, iv, no. 31, ll. 25-49, 56-62.

perpetuity, and the crown had neither the right to confiscate their property if they died sonless nor could royal officials enter their house and demand allowances and provisions¹. Of course, fines were to be imposed on the merchants guilty of sexual and physical offences, but the decision rested with eight or sixteen senior men of the town².

Three important points may be noted about these charters. First, the grants were made not to the artisans but to the merchants among whom a few were elevated to the position of managers of the endowment or the town as the case might be. The number of such managers coincides with what is recommended by the law-book of Br̥haspati, according to whom two, three or five persons shall be appointed as advisers of the guild³. Second, the charters tied down the merchants to the management of villages, which in one case were attached to a temple and in another to the rehabilitated town. The merchants enjoyed practically the same immunities and privileges as were enjoyed by priests and perhaps by some feudal barons in the villages granted to them. But since they were encumbered with the management of villages they could not give sole attention to their trade and commerce. These charters therefore show the feudalisation of merchants by turning them into some kind of landed intermediaries. Third, the activities of every guild were restricted to its locality so that it had no freedom of competition, a feature characteristic of the closed economy in the Middle Ages.

A fourth charter of a somewhat similar nature comes from the Dhārwar District in Mysore. Issued in about A.D. 725 by the *yuvarāja* Vikramāditya of the Cālukyas of Bādāmi to the *mahājanas* (brāhmaṇa burgesses?) of a town called Porigeṇe, now Lakshmeshwar, it lays down

1 Ibid., 32, ll. 27-38.

2 Ibid.

3 XVII. 10.

the mutual obligations of the royal officers and the inhabitants of the town¹. Royal officers are asked to protect royal gifts and proclamations, untenanted houses, continued enjoyment of (estate), etc.² On the other hand every household of the town is required to pay a tax to the district governors³. Subject to this the guild (of *mahājanas*) seems to have been authorised to levy taxes varying according to the status of the householder, to realise fines for theft and minor delinquencies and for the ten officers, and to escheat the property of childless persons⁴. The town has several other guilds, for every occupied house is required to pay according to its status to the guild of braziers. The charter is a clear indication of the growing powers and self-sufficiency of the guilds, which are entitled not only to religious taxes but also secular taxes from the urban population.

The Gupta period does not know of conversion of royal income from tolls and customs into benefices granted to the temples. The kings and chiefs were content with depositing certain amounts in cash for religious purposes⁵. In one case it seems to have been deposited with a committee of five⁶, which shows the continuation of the practice of Kuṣāṇa times when many guilds in Central India and Western Deccan acted as depositories of money on which they paid interest for religious purposes.

The guilds of artisans, more numerous in pre-Gupta times in Western India but by no means extinct in Gupta and post-Gupta times, were never granted any charters, which were granted in that region only to the merchants. The first, issued towards the close of the Gupta period, shows that just as priests and temples were given

1 *El*, xiv, no. 14.

2 *Ibid.*, 189.

3 *Ibid.*, 190.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *CH*, iii, no. 5, 7, 8, 9.

6 *Ibid.*, no. 5 ; cf. *JESHO*, ii, 283.

authority over peasants, so also merchants were given authority over their artisans. In the first case it meant the abnegation of royal power in the rural area; in the second its abnegation in towns. In the first case the needs of the landed grantees were met by attaching peasants to them; in the second the needs of the mercantile grantees by attaching labourers and artisans to them. In the first case the priests enjoyed the power of taxing the rural population; in the second, as time passed, the *mahājanas* came to wield that power over the town people. At any rate the charters issued by the princes of Western India and Karnaṭaka can be compared to feudal charters granted to similar guilds in the Europe of the Middle Ages. and together with the Dharmaśāstra rules they indicate the growing independence of the traders' guilds of royal control and their increasing self-sufficiency.

The practice of issuing coins by the *nigamas* during the post-Maurya and Gupta periods seems to provide further evidence of the rise of self-sufficient economic units. This accelerated the process of political disintegration, for issuing coins was an important function of the sovereign power. Besides, the issue of seals by Nālandā villages, which glorify themselves as *janapadas* even in Gupta times¹, indicates that they were emerging not only as politically independent but economically self-sufficient units. At least four such seals were issued from villages, some of which can be identified. During the earlier period coins and seals were issued by the *nigamas*, but not by rural units as we find in the post-Gupta period.

In the Gupta period irrigation also tended to become a local responsibility. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya lays down detailed rates to be paid by the peasants to the state for different kinds of irrigation, which makes it clear that irrigation facilities were chiefly provided by

1 Majumder & Altekar, *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, p. 267.

the state. Megasthenes also informs us that the state maintained irrigation inspectors. The Śaka ruler Rudradāman (c. A.D. 150) claims that he reconstructed the famous Sudarśana lake in Saurāṣṭra without levying imposts and forced labour from his subjects. During the Gupta period this responsibility was carried out by the provincial governor of this region. But already from the beginning of the Christian era the local population had begun to take the initiative in matters of irrigation. Dion Chrysostom (c. A.D. 50-117) informs us that in India, in order to convey water from large and small rivers, the local inhabitants made many channels². Later, the law-book of Bṛhaspati lays down that the guilds should look after irrigation dams³. For want of data we cannot trace the history of this process, but once the tendency began it was bound to undermine the influence of the central power in the countryside and help the rise of independent economic units.

We can draw certain tentative inferences from the analysis made above. Unlike Europe, in India the decentralisation of political power was not the result of fiefs granted to comrades-in-arms; the most important factor which contributed to this development was the practice of land grants made to priests and temples. It is clear that foreign invasions did not play any appreciable part in the process of feudalisation, as was the case in Europe.

The *agrahāras* or villages granted to brāhmaṇas bear some resemblance to manors, for in some cases the beneficiaries enjoyed the right of levying forced labour of all varieties on their tenants. The scope of forced labour seems to have been very wide, and it appears that the village headman, who compelled peasant women

2 Oratio, XXXV. 434, Mc Crindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, p. 175.

3 *kulyāyana-nirodhaḥ* according to the reading of Mitra Miśra in the *Vīramitrodaya*, 426, but *kulyānāṃ nirodhaḥ* in *Bṛ.*, XVII. 11-12.

to work in his fields and residence, was developing as a manorial lord. But, on the whole, while a great part of the time and energy of European peasants was consumed by their work on their master's fields, the peasantry in India gave most of their time to their own fields, of the produce of which a considerable share went to the holders of grants and other intermediaries. There is nothing to show, however, that most peasants were subject to such intermediaries; on the contrary the number of free peasantry seems to have been far greater. Further, the process of subinfeudation was not so extensive in India as in Europe, so that the actual tillers of the soil maintained some kind of indirect connection with the central government.

Because of the difficulty in interpreting obscure epigraphic terms used for hereditary administrators, and because of immense variations in the use of these terms in a vast country such as India, it is not possible to indicate with precision the hierarchical stages in the feudal organization, or the exact relation between *sāmanta*, *uparika*, *bhogika*, *pratihāra*, *daṇḍanāyaka*, etc. But it is beyond doubt that by the end of the Gupta period, say c. A.D. 500, the appearance of a large number of hereditary intermediaries tended to reduce many of the free peasantry to a semi-servile status. Nevertheless, the stages in the feudal organization were not so many and so complex as we find them in England. Although the *sāmantas* appear as feudal vassals from the 6th century A.D. onwards, we have no exact idea of their rights and obligations except that they had to furnish soldiers to their lords.

In mediaeval Europe land was granted to the feudal barons for services rendered to the state, but in India this practice seems to have been of a very limited character. According to Manu an official placed in charge of ten villages was assigned as much land as could be tilled by twelve oxen, or about a hundred acres.

Probably from Gupta times the idea was gaining ground that territorial units were meant for the enjoyment of local governors and officers, but in the early stage central control was effective enough to check this. Although I am not in a position to check the disputed passage in Fa-hsien's account which is taken as referring to the grant of revenues to the attendants and bodyguards of the king, there can be no doubt about a similar statement of Hsüan Tsang. According to this Chinese traveller, one fourth of the total revenues went directly to the state, but the remaining threefourths were reserved respectively for the endowment of priests, scholars and government officials. From this it can be inferred that the officials who supervised the work of administration in the whole kingdom were assigned only one fourth of its total revenues. This position was quite different from that which we find in mediaeval Europe, where the feudal baron was granted the revenues of the whole area placed under his administrative charge on condition that he sent regular tributes to the overlord out of the revenues realised from the people under him.

Summing up we can state that certain broad features of feudalism are noticeable from the Gupta, and especially from the post-Gupta, period onwards. These may be enumerated as the granting of both virgin and cultivated land, the transfer of peasants, the extension of forced labour, the restriction on the movements of the peasants, artisans and merchants, the paucity of coins, the retrogression of trade, the abandonment of fiscal and criminal administration to the religious beneficiaries, the beginnings of remuneration in revenues to officials, and the growth of the obligations of the *sāmantas*. How far these traits continued or were modified in subsequent times will form the subject of the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

FEUDAL POLITY IN THREE KINGDOMS (c. A.D. 750-1000)

(The process of the transfer of fiscal and administrative right to the recipients of land grants which began on a large scale under the Guptas and Harṣa was continued by their successors.) The Gupta kings directly made very few grants, most grants being endowments made by their feudatories or subordinate chiefs in Central India. But under the Pālas grants were generally made by the kings themselves. The earliest example is that of Dharmapāla, who granted four villages in North Bengal to the temple of Nunna Nārāyaṇa, founded by his vassal Nārāyaṇavarman at Śubhasthali¹. The real beneficiaries of the grant were the Lāṭa brāhmaṇas, priests and other attendants who waited upon the deity, and are also mentioned as grantees². The villages were made over as a perpetual grant, together with low land (*talapātaka*) and occasional markets (*haṭṭikā*) with all their localities, with the fines for the ten offences, and with exemption from royal molestation³. Dharmapāla again made over a village, presumably in the Nālandā area, to some local Buddhist religious leader, free from taxes and the entry of royal agents, together with the right to punish thieves⁴. The last twelve lines of the grant are not legible, but it is a reasonable guess that the inhabitants were instructed to carry out the orders of the grantee and pay him all proper dues⁵. A village

1 *EI*, iv, no. 34, ll. 30-52.

2 *Ibid.*, ll. 50-1.

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 52-53.

4 *Ibid.*, xxiii, no. 47, ll. 17-24.

5 *Ibid.*, Second side ll. 1-2.

named Mesika¹ in the district of Monghyr² was granted on similar terms by Devapāla to a brāhmaṇa. Here the cultivators (*kṣetrakaras*) and not the inhabitants (*prativāsins*), as in the earlier grant, were expressly ordered to obey the grantee³. The same king granted five villages⁴ on similar terms to the Nālandā monastery at the instance of Bālaputradeva of Sumātrā⁴. Again, in about 993 three villages in North Bengal (*Puṇḍrabhukti*) together with a certain measure of land formerly enjoyed by the Kaivarttas were given by Mahipāla for Buddhist worship on similar terms⁵. Four years later the same king granted a village in the same division to a brāhmaṇa for the same purpose, with the usual fiscal and administrative rights⁶. There may have been more religious grants under the Pālas, but the available ones show that in Bengal and Bihar brāhmaṇas, Buddhist monasteries, and Śaiva temples emerged as landed intermediaries, enjoying not only economic privileges at the cost of the king and cultivators but also administrative at the expense of the king.

It is remarkable that the Pāla writs granted the religious beneficiaries the right to punish thieves, a right which was usually retained in the land charters of Central India in Gupta times. Further, they were also authorised to punish ten offences (covered by the term *daśāparādhadaṇḍa* or *daśāpacāra*.) These ten offences are enumerated as: the appropriation of things that are not given, killing in a manner that is not in accordance with precept, the pursuit of wives of other men, harshness of language, untruthfulness, slandering in all directions, incoherent conversation, coveting the property

1 This may possibly refer to Mebus in the Lakhisarai area in south Monghyr.

2 *EI*, xviii, pp. 304 ff., ll. 38-44

3 *Ibid.*, l. 45.

4, *EI*, xvii, no. 17, ll. 33-40.

5 *EI*, xix no. I, B. ll. 26-44.

6 *Ibid.*, xiv, no. 23, ll. 30-49.

of others, thinking of things that are wrong, and tenacity of that which is not true¹. This list practically covers all offences against family, property and person. No cognisance may have been taken of the last four offences, but certainly other offences when committed within the village under the nose of the grantee would not go unpunished. It is held that *daśāparādhadaṇḍa* implied the right to the proceeds from ten offences², but the term *daṇḍa* should be taken in the sense of punishment and not in the sense of fine. The beneficiaries therefore were given the right to punish the people guilty of these offences, which may have taken the form of fine or physical punishment. (Thus the practice of granting the right of the administration of criminal law and justice began from the middle of the 8th century and became a common feature in the Pāla kingdom.) Without doubt religious elements came to be vested with such fiscal and administrative powers as they never enjoyed before in Bengal and Bihar.

✓ During the same period the Pratīhāra rulers made several land grants to brāhmaṇas in Northern India. In 836 an old *agrahāra* grant in the Kālañjara *maṇḍala* of the Kānyakubjabhukti was renewed by Bhojadeva I. The grant had been made by a feudatory with the approval of Nāgabhaṭa II, but had fallen into desuetude on account of the incapacity of the local legal officer in the reign of Rāmabhadra. So the village in question was regranted by Bhoja to the old brāhmaṇa family, who were to enjoy it with all the income excepting the gifts already made to gods and brāhmaṇas³. (A second grant of village as *agrahāra* was renewed by the same king in Gurjjarattarābhūmi. The grant had become ineffective under his great grandfather, but was issued by Bhoja to the grandson of the donee⁴. The two cases

1 *CH*, iii, 189 fn. 4.

2 *Ibid.*, 189.

3 *Ibid.*, xix, no. 2, ll. 1-16.

4 *Ibid.*, V, no. 24, ll. 6-9.

show that once made the grants became hereditary in theory and practice, and the successors of the original benefactor king were obliged to observe the grant, even when they were made by feudatories. Mahendrapāla, the son and successor of Bhoja, granted a village with all its income to a brāhmaṇa in the District of Chapra, which at that time was included in the Division (*bhukti*) of Śrāvastī¹. A village in the Banaras area was made over to a brāhmaṇa on similar conditions by Mahipāla in 931². Mahendrapāla II granted a village to a temple in Gwalior on practically the same terms, with the difference that it was bestowed along with its pasture grounds³.

Strikingly enough the grants of villages made directly by the Pratihāra kings do not specify the various agrarian and administrative rights which are made over in the Pāla charters to the donees. They merely transfer all the income of the village; and, like their Pāla counterparts, enjoin the villagers to obey the grantees and pay them all dues. The Pratihāra kings made the above-mentioned grants on religious grounds, but whatever their intentions there is no doubt that they gave rise to landed aristocracy between the king and the cultivators.

The process seems to have been still stronger in the kingdoms of the feudatories of the Pratihāras. In 893 Balavarman, son of Avanivarman I, the Cālukya vassal in Kāthiāwāḍ, granted a village to the temple of Taruṇādityadeva along with the fines to be realised from persons convicted of ten faults, not to be entered by royal agents, along with taxes and trees, and some other privilege which are not clear⁴. Another Cālukya feudatory of the same line Avanivarman II, with the approval of the royal official Dhiika, bestowed another

1 IA, xv, pp. 112-3, il. 1-12.

2 Ibid., pp. 138 ff., ll. 9-17.

3 EI, xiv, no. 13, ll. 9-13.

4 Ibid., ix, no. 1, A, ll. 1-20.

village on the same god on the same terms¹. In 914 Dharaṇivarāha, a Cāpa vassal in eastern Kāthiāwāḍ, granted a village to a teacher as reward for learning on the same conditions as the Cālukya vassal had done². In 946 at the request of a Cāhamāna vassal a village was granted to a sun-temple by Mādhava, the governor of Ujjain³. The conditions of grant were somewhat different, for it carried with it the additional right to the enjoyment of timber, reservoirs of water, and certain new taxes *skandhaka*, *mārggaṇaka*, etc.⁴, the significance of which is not clear. Finally, we may take note of the grant of a village in 959 made by a Gurjara vassal of the Pratihāras in the Alwar area to the guru of a *maṭha* and his successive disciples⁵. The above instances show that the practice of religious grants was more widespread in the kingdom of the feudatories of the Pratihāras than in the regions which they governed directly. The grantees were charged with the duty not only of maintaining law and order in the villages but also of realising various revenues, which could not have been possible without engaging subordinate staff for the purpose. Thus in parts of Gujarāt and Rājasthān religious grantees emerged as landed intermediaries in charge of police and fiscal administration.

✓ The Rāṣṭrakūṭas, who ruled over the whole of Mahārāṣṭra, southern Gujarāt, and parts of Karṇāṭak, seem to have made more grants of villages to temples and brāhmaṇas than the Pālas or the Pratihāras. Instances of these grants are available from the beginning of their rule. In 753-4 Dantidurga granted a settled village in the Kolhapur region to a brāhmaṇa with the right to collect all the customary taxes, such as land-tax, occasional payments to officials, etc., and with the right

1 Ibid., B, ll. 32-58.

2 IA, xii, 195, Plate II, ll. 1-24.

3 EI, xiv, no. 13, ll. 19-25.

4 Ibid., ll. 24-25.

5 Ibid., iii, no. 36, ll. 3-15.

to punish persons guilty of ten offences¹. Similarly in 806-7 Govinda III allotted to a brāhmaṇa in the Nāsik area a village with the above-mentioned rights, to which he added the right to forced labour, and exemption from molestation by regular and irregular soldiers and from the entry of all royal officials². All these concessions occur in his Paithan plates of 794³, and are repeated in a copper-plate grant of his in the Nāsik District⁴. In 871 a village was granted on similar terms to some brāhmaṇas by Amoghavarṣa⁵. Thus once increased under Govinda III, the fiscal and administrative concessions granted to religious donees were maintained on the same scale for about a century. A grant of a village made in 933-4 by Govinda V, however, omits the right to forced labour and exemption from the entry of royal officials⁶. In 972-3 a village was given in gift on these terms by Amoghavarṣa III in the Khandesh area⁷, but not rendered free from the entry of regular and irregular soldiers. This shows that in spite of variations in terms the process of the grant of villages to priests continued for more than two hundred years under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. All their copper-plates have not been discovered, yet those found so far are not few. We learn that on his coronation in 915 Indra III granted afresh 400 villages resumed by previous rulers⁸. The Cambay plates of Govinda IV state that on a similar occasion he gave 600 villages for religious and educational purposes (*agrahāras*) to brāhmaṇas and 800 villages to temples (*devakulas*)⁹. These two alone could

1 IA, xi, 112-3, ll. 29-44.

2 Ibid., 156-9, ll. 34-50.

3 EI, iii, no. 17, ll. 57-58.

4 IA, vi, 67-68, Plate IIB, ll. 12-13.

5 EI, xviii, no. 26, ll. 66-67.

6 IA, xii, 251 ff., ll. 50-53.

7 Ibid., 266, ll. 43-57.

8 A. S. Altekar, *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their times*, p. 100.

9 EI, vii, no. 6, ll. 46-49.

give a total of 1800 villages allotted to religious donees. We have no reasons to doubt the authenticity of these figures, for land grants were so frequent and common ; in fact the total number of all such villages may have been far greater.

Religious grants were also made by the governors and feudatories of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. In 821 Karkkarāja Suvarṇavarṣa of the Gujarāt Rāṣṭrakūṭa branch made a perpetual grant of a field to a religious teacher free from taxes, not to be entered by regular and irregular soldiers and royal officers¹. In 863 Dhruva III of the same branch granted to a brāhmaṇa a village on similar terms ; the beneficiary was also authorised to punish the persons guilty of ten offences and to requisition forced labour from villagers.² These chiefs made grants independently of their overlord, but Bankeya, the governor of Banavāsi, under Amoghavarṣa, prevailed upon the latter to alienate a village and plots of land in several villages in favour of a Jain temple³. All told, the number of villages alienated by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their vassals in favour of learned brāhmaṇas was considerable⁴.

The villages were granted in perpetuity, and the successors of the grantors were placed under the obligation of respecting these grants. Some grants survived even the overthrow of the family of the donor. Thus Indra II re-granted a village named Trenā, formerly bestowed upon the donee's ancestors by Dhruva I and II of the Gujarāt branch. The descendants were anxious to secure a re-grant of village, because the grantor's family no longer held power in southern Gujarāt⁵. Again, as shown earlier, Indra III renewed the grant of as many as 400 villages resumed by previous kings.

1 Ibid., xxi, no. 22, ll. 48-51.

2 *IA*, xii, 184-5, Plate II b, ll. 1-19.

3 *EI*, vi, no. 4, ll. 35-49.

4 Altekar, op. cit., p. 189.

5 Ibid., p. 98.

(Administrative rights were explicitly made over to the beneficiaries both by the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, although not by the Pratihāras. The Rāṣṭrakūṭas, however, gave the religious donees more coercive and administrative powers than even the Pālas did.) Some Pāla grants make gift-villages free from the entry of royal officials, others from that of regular and irregular soldiers, and still others from both; they also empower the donees to punish persons guilty of ten offences. But many Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants allow all these concessions together to the grantees. They do not, however, specifically mention the right to punish thieves, which is obviously covered by the right to punish ten offences. On the whole, we get the impression that the religious donees were not only larger in number under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas than under the Pālas or the Pratihāras but also stronger in administrative powers.

The grant of villages to priests may be compared to the practice of benefices given to the Church in mediaeval Europe, with the difference that brāhmaṇas and temples were not an organised group in India. The secular counterpart of benefices was, however, weak in early mediaeval India. Examples of officials and vassals paid by land grants are very few. The first Pāla grant (802) refers to an official in North Bengal called *daśagrāmika*¹, who, according to Manu, was paid one *kula* of land². But the later Pāla records do not mention this official; probably his post was a survival of the past which was fast disappearing. In 993 Mahipāla resumed the grant of 200 standard measure of land once allotted to the Kaivarttas for maintenance in return for certain services which are not specified³. This seems to have been a secular grant. Very probably *rājas*, *rājaputras*, *rāṇakas*, *rājarājanakas*, *mahāsāmantas*, *mahāsāmantādhipatis*, etc.,

1 *El*, iv, no. 34, l. 47.

2 VII. 118-9.

3 *El*, xxix, no. 1B, ll. 28-29.

mentioned in the Pāla land charters were mostly vassals connected with land. Some were vanquished and reinstated in their territories; others were probably granted land for their military service, which both classes had to furnish to their overlord.

The Pratihāra records also do not know of many secular grants. In 890 Bhoja I granted land in Gorakhpur to a Kalacuri chief called Guṇāmbhodhi or Guṇasāgara I, who had rendered valuable military service to his lord by snatching away the fortune of Gauḍa¹. Under Mahendrapāla II Vidagdha, a high official who signed two land grants², seems to have been in the enjoyment of a village³, possibly assigned to him by the Pratihāra king. A case of secular fief can be inferred from the grant made by a Gurjara feudatory of the Pratihāras, who describes the area in his possession as *svābhog-āvāpta vaṃśapotakabhoga*⁴. This suggests that as a scion of the ruling clan⁵ he was assigned by the Pratihāra overlord the district of Vaṃśapotaka for his personal benefit. His grants makes it clear that the assignee was responsible for the administration of that area, which lay in the Gurjjarattrābhūmi⁶.

The Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants nowhere directly alienate villages in favour of officials and vassals, but Altekar, who made a detailed study of their political system, holds that many state officers were paid by "rent-free" land⁷. We may better use the term revenue-free, for rent is something paid by the tenants to their landlords. Altekar adds that sometimes officers were remunerated

1 *bhojadeva-ūpta-bhūmih...śrī-guṇāmbhodhidevaḥ yena...ūhṛtā gauḍa-lakṣmī*, *CII*, iv, no. 74, verse 9.

2 *EI*, xiv, no. 13, ll. 14, 27,

3 *śrī-vidagdha-bhog-āvāpatye dhārōpadrakagrāme*, *Ibid.*, l. 21.

4 *EI*, iii, no. 36, l. 4.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 266-7.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 245.

by salaries, paid partly in cash and partly in kind¹. In any case so far as revenue organisation is concerned, villages in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa empire were grouped mainly in units of ten and its multiples² on the Dharmaśāstra pattern, according to which officers in charge of such units should be paid grants of land³. The arrangements seem to have been followed by the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings, especially in payment to the district and village headmen. Thus a *deśa-grāmakūṭa-kṣetra* or a revenue-free field of the district headman is twice mentioned in a spurious Gaṅga record⁴. Apparently the village headman, who was known as the *grāmakūṭa* in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dominions, was remunerated similarly. It is definite that in the southern Maratha country the village headman enjoyed revenue-free land. A record of the Raṭṭas of Saundatti informs us that the *gavunḍa* (village headman) of Kadole gave 200 *mattaras* of cultivable land, which was his revenue-free service land, situated in the circle of revenue-free service plots of the headmen of the locality⁵. In such a case the fiscal officer would have to render account to his master for the area under his jurisdiction, except the portion of land or revenues set aside for his payment.

The dominions of the Gujarāt branch of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas presented a curious mixture of the decimal pattern and the Rajput system consisting of units of 12 and 84 villages. We know of a unit of 12 villages given as a grant⁶, and a unit of 84 villages forming a part of a group of 750 villages which in its turn was strangely enough

1 Ibid., p. 189.

2 A *bhukti* comprising 500 villages under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas is mentioned in *IA*, xi, 112-3, l. 32. Units of 12000, 500, 300 and 70 are also mentioned (Altekar, op. cit., p. 77).

3 *Manu*, VII. 19.

4 Altekar, op. cit., p. 179.

5 Ibid., p. 193.

6 *El*, iii, no. 9, ll. 15-16.

divided into units of 10 villages¹. A unit of 84 villages is also mentioned in another grant of the Gujarāt branch². Units of 12 villages or their multiples also prevailed in other parts of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa empire outside Gujarāt. The Sanjāu plates of Amoghavarṣa I mention a group of 24 villages³, and under Govinda III the Pratiṣṭhānabhukti contained several groups of 12 villages⁴. A unit of 12 villages is also known under Amoghavarṣa III⁵. All these were obviously fiscal units, and, on the later analogy found under the Cāhamānas, they were given as fiefs to vassals or officials who were responsible for their administration.

We have some evidence to show that under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas military service was paid by land grants. Sometimes the Pallava kings commemorated the victories of a general by renaming villages after him and granting them to brāhmaṇas⁶. But Rāṣṭrakūṭa military officers were probably rewarded with villages for their bravery. *Grāmahokṭas* serving the Śilāhāras⁷ appear to have been military captains enjoying villages. According to Altekar *grāmapatis* mentioned in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa records were holders of *inām* (reward for service) villages⁸. Since the village headman was known as *grāmakūṭa* in Mahārāṣṭra and was different from the *grāmapati*⁹, the latter may have been a military captain. If we rely on the account of the merchant Sulaiman it would appear that the contemporary kings did not pay their soldiers. He informs us that the troops of the kings of India are numerous, but they do not receive

1 Ibid., i, no. 8, ll. 35-36.

2 *IA*, xii, 160, ll. 45-46.

3 *EL*, xviii, 256-7.

4 Altekar, op. cit., p. 137.

5 *IA*, xii, 266.

6 Ibid., viii, 279-80.

7 *EL*, iii, no. 37, l. 47.

8 Altekar, op. cit., p. 189.

9 Ibid.

any pay. The king assembles them only in the case of a religious war. They then come out and maintain themselves without receiving anything from the king¹." This applies to the troops supplied by the vassals. The merchant also remarks that, like the Arabs (but unlike most other Indian kings), the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king gave regular pay to his soldiers², but it is not clear whether they were paid in cash or by grants of land. Altekar suggests that the families of the soldiers were supported by villages tenanted to them³. At any rate Sulaiman's statement probably refers to the standing army maintained by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. But perhaps the troops supplied by the vassals outnumbered those maintained by the king.

Certain officials were paid by specified taxes. Taxes in kind imposed on foodstuff, vegetables, etc., formed part of the pay of local officers in the time of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas⁴. Altekar holds that *bhogakara*, a substitute for *uparikara*, implied taxes, normal or additional, in kind or cash, for the part payment of the salaries of the mofussil state officers⁵. This reminds us of a later, similar practice under the Candellas and the Gāhaḍavālas, and indicates partial feudalisation, for under the feudal system the barons who carried on administration were not paid in cash or kind directly by the state but were assigned certain revenues for their remuneration.

Vassals were assigned wide territories by their Rāṣṭrakūṭa overlord. New fiefs were created as a reward for military service. Most probably Amoghavarṣa I granted the territory between the Narmadā and the Tapi as a compensation for the loyal services of Karkka⁶, and

1 H. M. Eliot & J. Dowson (ed), *History of India as told by its Historians*, i, 7.

2 Ibid., 3.

3 Altekar, op. cit., p. 251.

4 Ibid., p. 181.

5 Ibid., p. 216, cf. pp. 194-5.

6 Ibid., p. 86-87.

the extensive dominion, which served as a bulwark against the Gurjara-Pratihāras¹, continued to be held by the Gujarāt Rāṣṭrakūṭas till *circa* A.D. 862². In their turn these chiefs allotted territories to their vassals. We learn from the inscription that a unit of 750 villages belonged to Karkka II³. Later the same source states that in this unit Candragupta served as the general (*daṇḍanāyaka*) of the *mahāsāmanta* Pracaṇḍa⁴. It is natural to infer that this group of villages was held by Pracaṇḍa as a fief from Karkka II, and perhaps the former's father Dhavalappa had received it as a reward for his bravery and loyalty⁵. Incidentally it also shows that after having received fiefs the vassals made their own administrative arrangements. A further instance of a grant made by the Gujarāt line is found in the reign of Govinda III (813) when the *mahāsāmanta* Budhavarṣa, possibly of Cālukya extraction, was given feudal sway over a group of 12 villages⁶. Similarly, the Raṭṭas of Saundatti in the southern Maratha region, feudatories first of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and then of the later Cālukyas, had possibly created their own sub-feudatories, for they are described as the lord of the *desakāras*⁷. These powerful vassals practised subinfeudation without any reference to their overlord. But governors or lesser vassals either prevailed upon the sovereign to grant villages or did it with his permission. On the application of Bankeya, the governor of Banavāsī, Amoghavarṣa I alienated a village in favour of a Jain temple⁸. Similarly, a Cālukya vassal of Govinda III had to obtain his sanction for giving a village to a Jain sage⁹. Again,

1 *IA*, xii, 158 ; the term *svāmi* is used for the overlord of Karkka.

2 Altekar, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

3 *EI*, i, no. 8, verse 20.

4 *Ibid.*, ll. 34-35.

5 Hultzsch. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

6 *tad-datta-siharakkhi-dvādaśake prabhujyamāne*. *EI*, iii, no. 9, ll. 15-19.

7 *IA*, xiv, 24 ; cf. Altekar, op. cit., p. 263.

8 *EI*, vi, no. 4, l. 34.

9 *IA*, xii, 18.

Saṅkaragaṇa, feudatory of Dhruva, took the latter's order for granting a village¹. But whatever might be the difference between the bigger and smaller vassals, (subinfeudation was practised widely under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.)

(The Pratihāra system differed from the Pāla in that it provided for subinfeudation.) The period under review provides no clear case of subinfeudation under the Pālas. Nārāyanavarman, the *mahāsāmantādhipati* of Dharmapāla, was instrumental in securing a grant of four villages from his overlord to a temple he had built², but he himself was not in a position to make such an endowment. The brāhmaṇas, Buddhist monasteries and temples, which received villages from the Pāla kings, may have assigned a part of their revenues or land to subvassals for management, but we have no means to prove this. On the other hand we have several instances of subinfeudation under the Pratihāras. Under Vatsarāja a donee transferred a sixth part of the donated village by a deed of endowment to Bhaṭṭa Viṣṇu in Gurjjarattrābhūmi³, somewhere in the Jodhpur area where the inscription has been discovered. This would imply that for religious purposes religious beneficiaries could freely dispose of the villages under their possession. As regards feudatories, some made grants with the sanction of the king, while others did so on their own initiative. The Cālukya feudatory Balavarmā granted a village to the temple of Taruṇāditya in Kāthiāwāḍ in his own right, but another feudatory of the same line, Avanivarmā II (898), had to secure the approval of an official of the Pratihāra king, in order to grant a village to the same temple⁴. In both cases the grantee was given the right of enjoying the benefice or getting it enjoyed, cultivating

1 *EI*, ix, no. 26, ll. 27-28.

2 *EI*, iv, no. 34, ll. 30-52.

3 *Ibid.*, v, no. 24, ll. 6-9.

4 *Ibid.*, ix, no. I, Plates A & B.

it or getting it cultivated¹. This left scope for further subinfeudation, leading to four stages of tenant in the feudatory dominions. Another case of similar subinfeudation took place in 959 under a Gurjara feudatory in the Alwar area. The vassal Mathanadeva, a kinsman of the ruling clan, disposed of part of his benefice freely, by granting a village to the guru of the *maṭha* and his successive disciples². The important clause with regard to the management of property was *kurvataḥ kārāyato vā*³, which implied absolute rights and left clear room for subinfeudation. Under this category also comes the grant of a village in eastern Kāthiāwāḍ by a Cāpa vassal in 914 to a teacher, without the permission of the overlord, but with the right of subgranting given to the donee⁴. The feudatory had secured his territory through the favour of the feet of his Pratīhāra suzerain⁵. Of a different nature was the grant made by a high official Mādhava, the governor of Ujjain, at the instance of a Cāhamāna vassal Indrarāja, to a temple built by the latter⁶. The land charter was jointly signed by Mādhava and another royal official Vidagdha⁷, which shows that even high Pratīhāra officers were not free to make grant without royal approval. This reminds us of the grant made by Dharmapāla at the request of his great vassal Nārāyaṇavarmā in North Bengal. The above examples would show that subinfeudation was practised not only in the dominions of their feudatories but also in the area directly governed by the Pratīhāras; but it was more frequent in the territory held by vassals.

(The right of subinfeudation and ejection conferred on

1 Ibid., Plate A, l. 19.

2 Ibid., no. 36 ll. 3-6, ll. 10-15, ll. 21-23.

3 *EI*, iii, no. 1. 16, l. 17; cf. p. 264, fn. 6.

4 *IA*, xii, p. 195, Plate II, ll. 1-24.

5 Ibid.

6 *EI*, xiv, no. 13, ll. 20-29.

7 Ibid., l. 27.

religious donees was a more prominent feature of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa polity. The beneficiaries were authorised to enjoy the village or to get it enjoyed, to cultivate the land or to get it cultivated¹. This important concession is specified only in a few Pratihāra charters in Gujarāt and Rājasthān, and not found in the Pāla charters. Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas the practice seems to have been universal in Mahārāṣṭra, southern Gujarāt and Karṇātak.) The privilege was fortified by the provision that royal officials were ordered not to cause any disturbance in the enjoyment of the village or getting it enjoyed by others, in its cultivation or getting it cultivated by others². This left clear and ample scope for subinfeudation by the donees. In such cases tenants would be mostly secular and would be requisitioned by those temples and brāhmaṇas who were given more villages than they could manage by themselves. Records of subinfeudation by religious donees are wanting because they could not be recorded on copper-plates. But there is little doubt that the donees exercised this important privilege bestowed on them.

The Pāla land charters mention more than two dozen grades of officials who had to be notified of the land grant³. Perhaps they were connected with the fiscal system in some way or the other. The total number of the various categories of officials in the Pāla kingdom cannot be calculated, but the term *aśeṣa-rājapuruṣān*⁴ used for them indicates a fairly large number. It seems that the greater part of the Pāla kingdom in Bengal and Bihar was administered by regular officers, who made central authority felt in the different parts of the kingdom. The position was radically different in the

1 *IA*, xi, 159, ll. 49-50 ; xii, 184-5, Plate II, l. 19, Plate III, l. 1 ; *EI*, xxii, no. 12, ll. 54-55, etc.

2 *Ibid.*

3 'The Bhagalpur Plate of Nārāyaṇapāla', *IA*, xlvii, p. 304 ff., ll. 30-36.

4 *Ibid.*, l. 30.

Pratihāra kingdom; the only officials mentioned in the grants made by the Pratihāra kings are *niyuktas*¹. Since they had few officials, probably their government rested in the hands of vassals who were kept under effective control. On several occasions their high feudatories and *mahāsāmantas* had to obtain royal permission to make land grants. Curiously enough we notice more officials in the dominions of their feudatories than in the area directly administered by the Pratihāra kings. But even here they numbered about half a dozen in contrast to more than two dozen kinds of officials mentioned in the Pāla land grants. This might suggest that the Pratihāra feudatories relied for administration on their sub-feudatories. So neither the Pratihāra kings nor their feudatories could develop any elaborate administrative machinery, and the greater part of the Pratihāra empire was probably governed by vassals.

The administrative machinery of the Rāṣtrakūṭas was a little more elaborate than that of the Pratihāras. A charter of 753-4 informs only three officers, *viṣayapati*, *rāṣtrapati* and *grāmakūṭa*, of the land grant². A land grant of Kṛṣṇa I (772) found in the Chanda District of Madhya Pradesh mentions only the first two officers and the *bhogapati*³. But a grant of 794 speaks of two new officials, *āyuktaka* and *niyuktaka*⁴, who usually appear in all later grants⁵. Thus we do not come across more than five regular officers. It may be argued that the other officers are not mentioned because they were not concerned with the grants⁶. But if this analogy is extended to the Pāla grants it would imply that two dozen Pāla officials were connected with land grants, which does not seem to be reasonable. Really the Rāṣtrakūṭa

1 *IA*, xv, 138 ff., l. II. J. 36.

2 *IA*, xi, 112-3, ll. 28-29.

3 *EL*, xiv, no. 6, l. 42.

4 *Ibid.*, iii, no. 17.

5 *IA*, xi, 159, ll. 35-36; vi, 67-68, Plate IIB of Govinda III, ll. 4-5.

6 Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

system did not provide for too many officers, for like the Pratihāras they mainly depended for their administration on their feudatories and vassals. This can be also inferred from the absence of the names of the police officials in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa records; only the Autroli-Charoli copper-plate of Karkkarāja of Gujarāt mentions officials concerned with thieves (*corodharaṇikas*)¹. Again the argument that they need no mention in land grants² does not seem to be tenable; probably in Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarāt police functions were entrusted to local vassals, which dispensed with the necessity of employing regular officials for the purpose.

The titles and designations of Pāla and Pratihāra kings and officials betray feudal relationships. The epithets *paramabhaṭṭāraka*, *parameśvara*, and *mahārājādhirāja* adopted by later Gupta rulers and then by Pāla and Pratihāra kings do not indicate any real increase in royal power but merely suggest that the king was supreme over lords, chiefs and princes owing allegiance to him. The term *mahā* (great or chief) found in the designations of Pāla officials *mahā-daussādhasādhanika*, *mahā-kārtāṅkṛtika*, *mahā-sāndhivigrahika*³, etc., shows that they were being brought in line with feudal vassals such as *mahā-sāmanta* and *mahā-rāja*.

The tendency to feudalise officers was stronger under the Pratihāras. We learn that in one case Kokaṭṭa, the commander-in-chief (*balādhikṛta*) of Mahendrapāla II, was known as *parameśvara-pād-opajīvīn*⁴. His contemporary, Mādhava, who held the title of governor (*tantrapāla*) and chief commander (*mahādaṇḍanāyaka*), was known as *mahāsāmanta*⁵, probably a title conferred on him by his Pratihāra overlord. Furthermore, Undabhata, the governor of a town, was a *mahāpratihāra*, but he held

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 *EI*, xvii, no. 17, ll. 26-33; xxix, no. 1B, ll. 31-34.

4 *EI*, xiv, no. 13, ll. 19-20.

5 Ibid., l. 20.

the title of *mahāsāmāntādhipati*¹, head of the vassals. Apparently these titles carried certain privileges and obligations, of which we have no clear idea. Nevertheless, the *mahāsāmānta* was an important figure, and in erecting religious pillars his subjects made reference to his reign and to that of his overlord².

Feudalisation of functionaries seems to have been a development of some importance under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. Śrī-Māṇḍalla, the *mahāsāndhivigrahika* of Dhruva, was a *sāmānta* (vassal) entitled to the use of five great musical instruments³. Provincial governors were given the status of *mahāsāmānta* or *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*⁴, and often bore the title of *rājā* or *raja* (Canarese)⁵. Some *viśayapatis* (district officers) enjoyed feudatory status⁶. *Bhogikas* or *bhogapatis*, officers in charge of *bhuktis* or *tālukās*, sometimes possessed feudatory titles⁷, as also did the governors of large towns. Kuppey, the governor of Soratur in Karṇāṭak, was a *mahāsāmānta* under Amoghavarṣa I⁸, in the same manner as a governor of Siyaḍoṇi under the Pratihāras. Military officers were likewise being given pompous uniforms, and they were allowed certain privileges which seem to have been confined to the feudal chiefs. As we learn from the case of the brāhmaṇa *daṇḍanāyaka* Visottara under Govinda IV in 930, they were invested with the robes of their office, assigned distinctive parasols, and permitted to use elephants and chariots⁹. The *yuvarāja* or the heir-apparent was also given feudal titles¹⁰.

1 Ibid., i, p. 173, l. 5.

2 Ibid., iv, no. 44, ll. 1-10.

3 *EI*, x, no. 19, ll. 65-66.

4 Ibid., xix, no. 4 A, l. 4.

5 Altekar, op. cit., p. 173.

6 Ibid., p. 177.

7 Ibid., p. 178.

8 Ibid., p. 182.

9 *EI*, xiii, 334 (verse 10).

10 Altekar, op. cit., p. 152.

The association of feudal titles with officials may be interpreted in two ways; either the *sāmantas* or *mahāsāmantas* were appointed to different posts or else the officers were placed in the recognised feudal categories. The first does not seem to be possible for several reasons. The offices were older while the feudal ranks were evolved later. Secondly, under the Pratihāras we know of officers who at first did not hold feudal titles but received them only later. Thirdly, if we accept the first alternative it would mean that even the *yuvarāja* was first made a *mahāsāmanta* and then raised to the status of crown-prince. This lands us in an absurd position, for generally the eldest son was considered to be *yuvarāja* by his birth. Hence the second alternative that officials were feudalised sounds more logical. The process of feudalisation affected the whole social order, and in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom, besides feudatories, regular officers, civil and military, high and low, were placed in one feudal rank or the other. It seems that official posts by themselves did not carry sufficient weight unless they were given feudal recognition.

An indication of the growing feudalisation of officials is found in the practice of using the same terminology to express the relationship between the vassals and the king and also that between the officials and the king. Although the term *rāj-opajīvin* is used at one place in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya¹, similar expressions came to be used frequently for both officials and vassals in the inscriptions of our period. The Parivrājaka inscriptions of Gupta times use the term *pāda-piṇḍ-opajīvin*², subsisting on the royal subsidy, but now in the Pāla and other inscriptions we have numerous other terms of the same type. These may be enumerated as *pāda-*

1 *AS*, II. 7.

2 *CII*, iii, no. 23, ll. 10-11.

*padm-opajivin*¹, *rāja-pād-opajivin*², *pāda-prasād-opajivin*³, *para-meśvara-pād-opjivin*⁷, etc.

Sometimes the vassals are also called *bhṛtya* and *sambandhin*, as can be inferred from the Prākṛt text *Sumaraiccakahā* by Haribhadra Sūri (c. A.D. 700-770)⁴. It shows that the defeated chiefs entered into the relations of 'kinsmen' with the conquering overlord and his nobles. Thus two nobles, one a Śabara and the other a vaiśya, attached to the same prince, treated each other as *sambandhin*, a term translated as kinsman by Dr. Dasharatha Sharma⁵. But they neither belonged to the same kin nor were related to one another by ties of marriage. The term *sambandhin*, however, had to be used, because no other word could express this bond between the overlord on the one hand and his nobles on the other. It also seems to imply the relationship between two vassals of the same overlord. We learn from the same text that when a frontier chief rebelled against his overlord, the son of that lord asked his people not to take very stringent measures, saying : "This Vighraha is an insignificant chief. But he had been paying tribute to our father. Hence he is our kinsman and we should not take any precipitate military action against him⁷." The prince looks upon Vighraha, the *bhṛtya* of his father, as his elder brother⁸, the idea being that both the prince and the vassal were the dependants of the overlord. The fact that a prince (kṣatriya) of the ruling dynasty considers himself as the younger brother of a defeated

1 *El*, xxiii, no. 47, l. 15.

2 "The Bhagalpur Plate of Nārāyaṇapāla", *IA*, xlvii, 304 ff., 1.37.
This title is frequently used.

3 *CII* iii, no. 46, l. 11.

4 *El*, xiv, no. 13, ll. 19-20.

5 *Proceedings of the 24th Session of the Indian History Congress* (Delhi, 1961), pp. 80-1.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

8 *Ibid.*

aboriginal Śabara chief shows that the hereditary element, so characteristic of the varṇa system, did not always determine the social relations, which were sometimes shaped by political and military considerations although were expressed in the prevailing tribal or family idiom. Thus an aboriginal chief who paid tribute to, and depended on, the king was regarded as his son and not condemned as an *anārya*¹ according to the Dharmaśāstras. However, the terms *sambandhin* and *bhṛtya* are not employed by the epigraphs to indicate feudal relationships; generally the feudal lords and officials are described as subsisting on the lotus feet of the king.

The chief obligation of the vassals was to pay homage and render military aid to their overlords. One of the ways in which they paid homage was to mention the name of their overlords in their grants, as was done by the vassals of the Pratihāras. Similarly on several occasions Cāhamāna², Cālukya³, Guhilot⁴ and Kalacuri vassals gave military help to their Pratihāra overlords. The grants issued by the Pāla kings, from Devapāla onwards, invariably describe their victory camps as being attended by numerous tributary princes from Northern India accompanied by their contingents⁵. This may be an exaggeration, but may refer to small local chiefs who assembled at the temporary capitals to wait on their Pāla overlords. At any rate there is

1 In the inscriptions the nearest approximation to *sambandhin* may be the phrase *yathā-sambandhya-mānakān*, used in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants to qualify the *rāṣṭrapati*, *viṣayapati*, *grāmakūṭa*, *yuktaka*, *niyuktaka-adhikārika*, *mahattaras*, etc., who were addressed and instructed about the land grant. Apparently the phrase does not convey any kind of special feudal relationship; it merely speaks of those who are concerned with land grants.

2 HCIP, iv, pp. 22-23, 27.

3 Ibid., p. 25.

4 Ibid.

5 *udicin-āneka narapati prabhṛti...paramaśvara-sevā-samāyāt-āśeṣa-jambūdvīpa-bhūpāla*...EI, xvii, no. 17, ll. 22-23.

no doubt that in order to suppress the Kaivartta revolt in about 1070 the Pālas mobilised the military support of their vassals on a massive scale.

The Rāṣṭrakūṭa records give us some idea of the powers and privileges as well as the obligations of the vassals. A measure of the high feudal rank enjoyed by some vassals was their investiture with the *pañca-mahāśabda* by the Pratihāra¹ and Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings². Without doubt this was the highest distinction that could be attained by a vassal, for even the *yuvarāja* enjoyed no higher feudal privilege than this. Even when some feudatories had adopted such imperial titles as *paramabhaṭṭāraka-mahārāja-prameśvara*, they continued to bear this epithet. It was, however, not known in the Pāla kingdom, although it obtained in Assam and Orissa. Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas vassals were also permitted to use a feudal throne, flywhisk, palanquins and elephants³, of which we have no clear indication under the Pālas and Pratihāras. As shown earlier, an important right of the vassals was to create their sub-vassals, some of whom were given the privilege of using the five great musical instruments; we may quote here the examples of the *mahāsāmanta* Nimbadevarasa, a vassal of the Koṅkan Śilāhāras⁴, and of the *mahāsāmanta* Buddhavarasa, a vassal of the Gujarāt Rāṣṭrakūṭas⁵. Subject to the payment of tribute the big vassals enjoyed full power over their revenues. They could assign taxes⁶ and grant villages, sometimes with and sometimes without the permission of the overlord. Under

1 *EI*, iv, no. 44 ll. 1-10; ix, no. 1, l. 3.

2 *Ibid.*, xxii, no. 12, l. 39; *IA*, xii, 184, Plate IIb, l. 1; the term used in these grants is *samadhigatā'seṣamahāśabda*, but see the Antroli-Chharoli record of Karkka II quoted in Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

3 Altekar, *op. cit.*, 263.

4 *EI*, xix, no. 4A, ll. 4-5.

5 *Ibid.*, iii, no. 9, ll. 12-19.

6 *IA*, xiii, 160-1, ll. 45-54; xii, 136.

the Western Cālukyas vassals could also sell villages without the sanction of the imperial power¹.

The vassals bore both civil and military obligations towards their overlord. Their most important civil obligation was regular payment of tribute, which was sometimes personally realised by the overlord. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Govinda III went on tour in the southern parts of his empire to levy tribute from his feudatories². A later text, the *Nītivākyāṃṛta*, refers to special presents made by vassals in the court on such festive occasions as the birth of a son or a royal marriage³. Other obligations of a civil nature were compliance with imperial orders, and attendance at the imperial court on ceremonial occasions and at periodical intervals⁴ which took the form of rendering homage. The vassals were clearly not obliged to render any advice to the overlord or render him any administrative assistance at the centre.

Military obligation was more important, and consisted in rendering aid to the overlord in times of war. The vassals of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas had to supply a certain number of troops to their lord and participate in his imperial campaigns. The Cālukyas of Veṅgi had to furnish forces to the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in their wars against the Gaṅgas⁵. Narasiṃha Cālukya, a feudatory of Indra III, took a successful part in the latter's campaign against the Gurjara-Pratihāra king Mahipāla⁶. The Gujarāt Rāṣṭrakūṭa viceroyalty, in practice a large fief, was created to serve as a shield against the Gurjara-Pratihāras for the protection of Malwa⁷, which was also

1 *El*, iii, 307.

2 *IA*, xi, 127.

3 XXX. 32 quoted in Altekar, op. cit., p. 265.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-94.

6 Nāga Varmma's *Karṇāṭakabhūṣābhūṣaṇa*, ed. L. Rice, Introd., p. xiv.

7 *IA*, xii, 158.

a bone of contention between the Marathas and the Rajputs in the 18th century.

Just as the Rāṣṭrakūṭa rulers claimed military service from their vassals, so also their vassals claimed it from their sub-vassals. This can be inferred from the Kolhapur inscription of the Śilāhāra *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* Gaṇḍarādityadeva. Although a record of 1135, it might be taken as a survival of the state of affairs when the Śilāhāras were the vassals of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. It describes the relations of the *mahāsāmanta* Nimbadeverasa with various kinds of vassals, inimical and friendly, probably towards his overlord Gaṇḍarāditya. The *mahāsāmanta* is represented as "a breaker of the hair-parting of the dames of hostile barons, a gallant dear to the courtesans of warriors, a wind dissipating the clouds [of] opponent barons, a furious elephant to Nāgaladevī, a time of world dissolution to enemy barons, a Gopāla to the worthiest of barons, a heroic Kumāra to the demon Tāra's rival barons, an awful rutting elephant to the beds of the lotuses [who are] the barons of Toṇḍai, [a] rod for the skilful right hand of King Gaṇḍarāditya...crest-gem of barons..."¹ This glowing account of the achievements of the great vassal may not be literally true, but it clearly indicates the obligation of a *mahāsāmanta* to suppress inimical and protect friendly *sāmantas*.

The overlord exercised control over his feudatories in various ways. Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas feudatories had to entertain an ambassador from the imperial court. He exercised general supervision and control, similar to that of the Resident in British India. According to

1 *vijaya-lakṣmi-kāntaṃ, ripu-sāmanta-simantini-simanta-bhaṅgaṃ, vira-vārāṅgaṇā-priya-bhujāṅgaṃ, vāiri-sāmanta-megha-vighaṭana-samiraṇaṃ, nāgaladeviya gandha-vāraṇaṃ, vidviṣṭa-sāmantavilaya-kūlaṃ, sāmanta-gaṇḍa-gopālaṃ, dāyāda-sāmanta-tārāsura-vira-kumōraṃ, sāmanta-kedāraṃ, toṇḍa-sāmanta-puṇḍarika-ṣaṇḍa-pracaṇḍa-mada-vedaṇḍaṃ, gaṇḍarādityadeva-dakṣa-dakṣiṇa-bhujādaṇḍaṃ...sāmanta-śiromaṇi...EI, xix, no. 4A, ll. 5-8, tr. L. D. Barnett, ibid., p. 34.*

Sulaiman he was received with the profound respect due to the representative of the paramount power. He maintained numerous spies for obtaining information. Amoghavarṣa I is known to have covered the courts of hostile kings with thousands of courtesans, who probably worked under the imperial ambassador¹. The overlord made his power felt by alienating villages in the dominions of his vassals. Kṛṣṇa II allotted a village situated within the jurisdiction of the *mahāsāmanta* Pracaṇḍa². Disloyal feudatories were kept under check by the fear of humiliation and retribution that followed the failure of their rebellions. They were subjected to various indignities; the ruler of Veṅgi had to sweep the stables of his victor Govinda II³. Feudatories had to surrender their precious gems, treasures, dancing girls, horses and elephants to the imperial power as punishment for their disloyalty⁴. Even their wives were put into prison⁵. Sometimes the defeated feudatories were dispossessed of all their property and territories, out of which the king created livings for his dependants, as Kṛṣṇa III did in South Arcot District after having conquered the Coḷa territories⁶.

We have no clear idea of the royal machinery for dealing with the vassals. Perhaps the *mahāsāndhivigrahika* was in charge of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa royal policy towards the vassals both in times of war and peace. Altekar holds that this official drafted all the land charters because the foreign office possessed the most reliable and up-to-date information on the exploits and genealogy of the grantor to be incorporated in the grants⁷. But an equally, if not more, important portion of the charter

1 Altekar, op. cit., p. 264.

2 *EI*, i, no. 8 ll. 33-35.

3 *Ibid.*, xviii, no. 26, verses 43-36.

4 Altekar, op. cit., p. 267.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *EI*, iv, no. 40, verses, 34-35.

7 Altekar, op. cit., p. 166.

related to the whereabouts of the grantor and grantee as well as of the village to be granted, and this could have been better recorded by the revenue office. However, this had to be done by the *sāndhivigrahika*, because, in our opinion, he dealt with feudatories of all kinds. The *Mānasollāsa* written in 1131 by Someśvara III of the Cālukya dynasty of Kalyāṇi, which had supplanted the Rāṣṭrakūṭa power in 973, lays down that the *sāndhivigrahika* should be an expert in summoning and dismissing and in installing the *sāmantas*, *maṇḍaleśas*, and particularly the *mānyakas*¹. Since peacetime relations with the vassals consisted in stipulating tributes levied on grants of land or in confirming the jurisdiction of the vassal over the fiefs, he drafted all secular charters and even those relating to land grants to brāhmaṇas and temples².

In spite of imperial control sometimes the vassals made their power felt in central politics. The feudatories of Govinda II rebelled against him and offered the crown to his uncle Amoghavarṣa III, who was pressed by them to accept it to preserve the glory of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom. Altekar thinks that the phrase *sāmantai - ratha raṭṭa-rājya-mahim-ālabh - ārtham - abhyarthitah*³, which conveys this meaning, is figurative⁴, but the election of the king among the Pālas of Bengal and the Somavaṃśis of Orissa lends support to the selection of Amoghavarṣa III. This instance therefore shows that the vassals could even depose and install kings, although such cases were rare and did not have the sanction of law.

The vassals and aristocratic elements occupied a fairly important position in local government, which were being gradually monopolised by narrow family circles.

1 II. verse 128.

2 *Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj.*, I. 319-20.

3 *El*, iv, no. 40, verse 21 ; v, no. 20, verse 19.

4 Altekar, op. cit., p. 151.

Supervisors over units of 10 or 12 villages were appointed by the district officers from amongst their relatives. In the Dharwar District an officer of Amoghavarṣa I ruling over a unit of 300 villages had under him a relative in charge of 12 villages¹. Bankeya, the governor of Banavāsī, appointed his son Kundaṭṭa to administer the Niḍgugundage twelve². According to Altekar the terms *rathika*, *rāṣṭriya*, *rāṣṭrapati*, and *rāṣṭrakūṭa* were used to denote local chiefs, district officers, and big landlords³. Some records mention *viṣayamahattaras* and *rāṣṭramahattaras*⁴, who seem to have been associated with the management of local affairs, but they probably represented aristocratic and hereditary rather than popular elements.

The mention of only the village elders in the grants presupposes some social stratification in the rural area. In the Pāla grants of Bengal and Bihar all sections of the village population right from the brāhmaṇas down to the caṇḍālas are informed of the land gifts. But they do not figure in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants in Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarāt; on the other hand their place is taken by the *mahattaras* or the *mahattarādhikārins*⁵. Some of these rose further in status and acquired the rank of *rāṇaka*; such was the *mahattaka* Gogu-Rāṇaka, who acted as the executor of a grant of Amoghavarṣa I⁶. A *mahattarasarvādhikārin*, who held a similar position under Kṛṣṇa II⁷, is another example. Apparently the *mahattaras* were elevated at the cost of the other sections of the rural population, and they provided a suitable social base for the recruitment of higher functionaries and for the growth of feudalism under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.

The development of feudal relations between the state

1 *El*, vi, 107.

2 *Ibid.*, vii, 214.

3 Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

5 *IA*, xii, 251, l. 41; 263, ll. 45-46.

6 *El*, xviii, 257.

7 Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

and the guilds also characterised the Rāṣṭrakūṭa polity. A guild of the merchants of Dambal was invested with umbrellas, *chowries* (ceremonial fans), and royal charters by the Cālukya king Jagadekamalla¹. The same seems to be true of the guilds under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, for the Kolhapur² and Miraj³ inscriptions of the Śilāhāras, the feudatories of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, refer to the banner of the guild of the Vīra-Balañjas (the company of Brave Merchants) bearing the device of a hill. Umbrellas, *chowries* and banners were symbols of power delegated to the guilds by the kings, and reminds us of feudal charters granted to them in mediaeval Europe. Like feudal vassals, guilds were placed under the obligation of supplying soldiers to their sovereign. The Kolhapur record describes the guild of merchants as "exalted in abundant boldness, embraced by the lady Fame, having their breasts a home for the goddess of victory (won by their arms), lofty in prowess (extending) over the world."⁴ Another record speaks of a similar guild under the Cālukyas as comprising persons, "whose breasts were embraced by the goddess of perfect impetuosity and bravery⁵." All this shows that guilds maintained soldiers and probably helped their overlords.⁶

The Pālas had no fixed cāpital. Pāṭaliputra⁷, Mudgagiri⁸, Rāmāvatī⁹ (near modern Gaura in the Malda District), Vaṭaparvataka (modern Vaṭeśvara-parvata near Patharghaṭā in the Bhagalpur District), Vilāsapura

1 *IA*, i, 188.

2 *EI*, xix, no. 4, l. 12.

3 *Ibid.*, B, ll. 2-3. This banner of the guild is also mentioned in a Cālukya inscr. (*IA*, v, 344).

4 *EI*, xix, 34.

5 *IA*, x, 189.

6 *EI*, iv, no. 34.

7 Professor Basham informs me that according to the *Cūlavamsa* the Mañigrāma supplied mercenaries to the kings of Ceylon.

8 "The Bhagalpur Plate Nārāyaṇpāla" *IA*, xlvii, p. 304 ff., ll. 27-28.

9 "The Manhali copper-plate etc.," *JBAS*, lxix, Pt. I, p. 66 ff., l. 30.

or Haradhāma¹, Sāhasagaṇḍa², Kāñcanapura³, and Kapilavāsaka⁴ (the last four unidentified) are mentioned as their *jayaskandhāvāras*. All these capitals were situated on the Gaṅgā, which served as a great unifying factor in the Pāla dominions. But the constant shift of the seats of power was certainly a disintegrating factor in the kingdom, and indicates administrative decentralisation typical of feudal polity. In this respect the Pratihāras enjoyed more stability, for only Ujjayinī and Mahodaya, identical with Kanauj, are known to have been their capitals⁵. They did not feel the necessity of impressing their power on the feudal lords by moving their capital from place to place.

In contrast to the Pālas the Rāṣṭrakūṭas had a definite capital situated at Mānyakheṭa or Malkhed. We know of their several military and ordinary camps⁶, from which they issued land charters. Al Masūdī informs us that the seat of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king's government was generally among mountains, which Altekar does not believe⁷. But the statement may indicate shifting military camps at places with good natural defence for the suppression of refractory vassals.

What distinguished the Rājput polity was the imposition of clan aristocracies on old, settled villages. The Gurjaras came in the wake of the Hūṇas from Central Asia. It is thought that they were the Indian equivalents of a Central Asian people Wusun, who came to be known as Gusur in the fourth century, and this gave

1 *IA*, xiv, 166-8; xxi, 97-101; *EI*, no 23, l. 28; cf. *ibid.*, xxix; 4; fn. 3.

2 *EI*, xxix, no. 1, B, l. 26.

3 *Ibid.*, no. 7, l. 24.

4 *Ibid.*, xxxiii, no. 47, l. 2.

5 An early capital of the Pratihāras was Merta, 60 miles north-east of Mandor. The term *rājadhānī* in the sense of capital is used in the mediaeval Deccan (*The Early History of the Deccan*, I-VI, ed. G. Yazdani, p. 51).

6 *Ibid.*, xi, 159, l. 37; *EI*, vii, no. 13, l. 32.

7 Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

rise to the term Gujar which was sanskritised into the term Gūrjara¹. We may add that as a foreign element the Gusurs appeared in India earlier. An inscription of the 3rd century from Abbotabad mentions "Shaphar who is the son of Maka and a member of the Gaśūra clan or class"². Here both Maka and Shaphar are foreign names, and so is the term *gaśūra*, which is equated with the Krorayina *guśura* and Kuchean Sanskrit *gauśura*, interpreted as a person of good family or of the Gausura class of nobility³. This suggests that the Gausuras or Gurjaras came to India as a conquering minority. Coming from outside, they imposed themselves as dominant clans on settled villages. The tribal practice that the spoils should be distributed among the members of the tribe led to the apportionment of villages among the conquering chiefs, some of whom received them in units of eighty-four. Units of 12 and 84 villages are found in Gujarāt under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, and may have originated because of Gurjara settlements in that area⁴. So far as the kingdom of the Gurjara-Pratihāras is concerned, this unit first occurs in a ninth century inscription of a Cālukya feudatory of the Pratihāras⁵, but units of twelve and its multiples are found in the records of the Cāhamānas, Paramāras, and Caulukyas⁶. This is understandable because perhaps all these three tribes were ethnically allied to the Gurjara-Pratihāras, as can be inferred from the bardic traditions which trace the origin of all these peoples to a common sacrificial pit

1 P. C. Bagchi, *India and Central Asia*, pp. 138-9.

2 *El*, xxx, 61.

3 *Ibid*.

4 Place-names in North-Western and Central India can throw some light on the nature and extent of the Gurjara expansion, and the village units in Muslim and British times on their original character.

5 *El*, ix, no. 1A, l. 10.

6 R. S. Sharma, "Land grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India (1000-1200)", *JESHO*, iv, 88 ; 90-91, 94.



(*agnikunḍa*) on Mount Abu. Whether earlier tribal organisation in Central Asia knew of the practice of sharing settlements in certain numerical units is a point worth investigation. When the Yue-ches conquered Ta-hia (Tokharestan) in the 2nd century B.C., they distributed the whole area among five chiefs¹. But in the early Middle Ages the Central Asian tribes preferred to have units of twenty-four. The earliest indication is found in Tokharestan in the middle of the 7th century A.D., when the Turkish ruler of that region divided that area into twenty-four districts with the help of the Chinese². We have also some idea of the number of the component tribes of the Oghuz, a Turkish people of Central Asia, whose history is known from the 8th century A.D. In the beginning the Oghuz were a group of nine tribes³, but as they gradually incorporated defeated peoples into their group the number rose to twenty-two in the 11th century⁴. Slowly their number went up to twenty-four, for in the Seljuk period the Qiniq are listed by a contemporary as one of the twenty-four clans of the Oghuz⁵. Probably the Central Asian custom of increasing the number of clans in a national unit was imported into mediaeval India. According to the later bardic tradition the Rajputs consisted of thirty-six clans, which in the beginning may have numbered twelve or twenty-four. It seems that whenever new territories were conquered an attempt was made to provide at least one village for every clan of the conquering horde, giving rise to units of twelve or twenty-four villages. But later these units became conventional, and the head of a clan or the scion of the ruling chief was given groups of twelve villages or their multiples.

1 P. C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

3 C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 210.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 210-11.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 298, fn. 44.

What is the significance of the introduction of the duo-decimal system? The Pāla fiscal units of one and 10 villages placed under the *grāmapati* and the *daśagrāmika*¹ were as old as Manu. It seems that under the decimal system officials appointed by the king administered the areas placed under their charge under direct royal control. Perhaps this accounts for so many officials under the Pālas, although under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas some decimal units were held by feudatories and their relatives. Again, under the decimal system officials were paid by grant of some land, which formed a very small part of the total area under their jurisdiction. On the other hand under the duo-decimal system, if we go by the Cāhamāna inscriptions of later times, territorial units were held mainly not by regular officials but by vassals who generally happened to be the members of the ruling class. Further, the decimal system seems to have prevailed in Eastern India, and from the eighth century it also obtained in the Deccan, where the new peoples could not penetrate in any considerable numbers. On the other hand the duo-decimal system prevailed in parts of Rājasthān and Gujarāt, and at a later stage in Uttar Pradesh also². In course of time the assignees of these Rājput village units came to look upon themselves as their enjoyers and called them their personal estates (*svabhoga*).

The increase of religious intermediaries in land, the payment of vassals and officials by land grants, the feudalisation of the titles of kings and officials, the shifting of capitals, the imposition of clan chiefs on old villages, all these factors may be taken as feudal elements in the early mediaeval polity of Northern India. But on the whole most of them are more typical of the Prāthīhāra polity than of the Pāla. In the

1 *EI*, iv, no. 34, l. 47. The *daśagrāmi* first appears in Kauṭilya's *AS*.

2 Cf. H. C. Raychaudhuri, *The Early History of the Deccan*, Pts. I-VI, ed. G. Yazdani, p. 51.

Rāṣṭrakūṭa polity, however, the number of religious beneficiaries enjoying fiscal and administrative rights was greater; the right of subinfeudation was widely recognised; the obligations and privileges of the vassals, who sometimes deposed their overlord and installed another, were fairly defined; and even guilds were treated as vassals. Officials were few, and were becoming feudalised. Local administration was mainly manned by the feudalised officials, vassals and their families, who probably maintained some link with the village elders. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa capital was, however, fixed, and units of villages generally followed the traditional decimal system rather than the Rajput pattern based on units of twelve or sixteen villages.



CHAPTER III

FEUDAL ECONOMY IN THREE KINGDOMS

(c. A.D. 750-1000)

The existence of landed intermediaries, restrictions on the movement of artisans and peasants, and the decline of trade which appeared in the economy of Gupta and post-Gupta times were strengthened under the rule of the Pālas, Pratihāras and Rāṣṭrakūṭas. The Pālas created many religious intermediaries in land. The endowments were enjoyed by Vaiṣṇavite¹ and Śaivite² temples. Far more important were the Buddhist monasteries³; one of these, Nālandā, owned 200 villages in the second half of the seventh century⁴. Their number was increased by five under Devapāla in the 9th century⁵. Uddantapurī, Vikramaśilā and Jagaddala may similarly have possessed hundreds of villages. Further, we have records of several brāhmaṇas who were endowed with villages⁶. It is suggested that such grants accounted only for a fraction of agricultural land in Bengal and that they did not touch the mass of cultivators⁷. But if the pattern of expenditure under Harṣa served as a model to his successors, it could appear that about $\frac{1}{4}$ of land revenues may have been conferred on bene--

1 *EL*, iv, no. 34, ll. 30-52.

2 *IA*, xlvii, pp. 304 ff., ll. 39-46.

3 *EL*, xxiii, no. 47, ll. 17-24.

4 J. Takakusu (tr.), *A Record of the Buddhist Religion* (I-Tsing's account), p. 65.

5 *EL*, xvii, no. 17, ll. 33-40.

6 *EL*, xvii, no. 17, ll. 33-40.

7 P. C. Chakravarti, *History of Bengal*, i (ed. R. C. Majumdaē), p. 647.

ficiaries for educational and religious purposes. In any case even the Pāla grants that survive suggest that a sizable number of villages was held by priests, temples and monasteries.

We have no indication of bigger religious and educational institutions holding numerous villages in the Pratihāra dominions. But several villages were granted as *agrahāras*¹ by the Pratihāra kings. Besides these, villages were granted to individual priests and temples by both Pratihāra rulers and their feudatories.

In the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom far more villages were held by temples and brāhmaṇas than in the Pāla and Pratihāra dominions taken together. Apart from grants of villages made singly the Rāṣṭrakūṭa records speak of the regrant of 400 villages by one ruler², and the grant by another ruler of 1400 villages, 600 *agrahāras* and 800 villages to temples (*devakulas*)³. Thus under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas priestly institutions rather than priests themselves seem to have emerged as important intermediaries in land, a feature not so characteristic of the Pāla and Pratihāra territories. This development seems to have taken place in Mahārāṣṭra under the influences of the South where temples possessed more landed property than individual priests.

(The Pālas⁴, Pratihāras⁵ and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas maintained certain secular intermediaries in land,—vassals and officials,—who were rewarded with villages for services rendered to the state.) The epigraphic records show that their number was not as many as that of religious grantees. But if religious services were

1 *EI*, xix, no. 2, ll. 1-16 ; V, no. 24, ll. 6-9.

2 A. S. Altekar, *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their times*, p. 100.

3 *EI*, vii, no. 6, ll. 46-49.

4 R. S. Sharma, "Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India" *JESHO*, iv, 71-72.

5 *CII*, iv, no. 74, verse ; *EI*, xiv, no. 13, l. 21 ; *ibid.*, iii, no. 26, l. 4.

rewarded with and maintained by land grants, what could have been the other possible mode of rewarding secular services, especially when coins were not in common use? Perhaps these secular land grants were as many or more than religious, but since they were not expected to endure indefinitely they were inscribed on palm-leaf or cloth and therefore have perished. Probably the secular grantees were somewhat different from the religious. The first were free from all taxes to the state,¹ but the second possibly paid certain tributes. The first enjoyed perpetual occupancy rights over their benefices, but the second may have owned the estates only so long as they fulfilled their obligations to the king. Whatever the differences between the two sets of grantees, there is no doubt that they together constituted important intermediaries in land between the king on the one hand and the actual tillers of the soil on the other. For all practical purposes they became the occupiers and enjoyers of the villages, thus giving rise to a class of landed barons who grew at the cost, and with the sanction, of royal authority over land.

The grantee could take advantage of the terms of the grants to acquire or increase the area of land under his direct cultivation. An important feature they could exploit to their advantage was the absence of the demarcation of gift villages. But (the Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants invariably define the boundaries of the villages given to the donees², who naturally could not extend their area of cultivation.) The same was true of some Pāla grants. Thus in the case of four villages granted by Dharmapāla in North Bengal it was difficult for the bene-

1 In Orissa, however, taxes (*kara*) were paid by some religious grantees.

2 *El*, xxii, no. 12, ll. 42-45; no. 13, ll. 56-58; *IA*, vi, 68; *El*, xviii, no. 26, ll. 64-65.

ficiary to expand his arable land or reserve outside his estate. But where this was not done his resources could enable him to extend his demesne. (Most Pāla and Pratihāra charters do not specify the boundaries of the village but merely state that it was granted with its boundaries up to its pasture grounds and shrubs (*svasīmā-tṛṇa-yuti-gocara-paryantah*). Hence the grantee could push the boundaries further to add to the fields which were personally exploited by him. ✓

(Another factor which conduced to the extension of the demesne of the grantee was the right of resumption of ownerless property conferred on him by the grantee. The practice prevailed in certain parts of the Pratihāra kingdom in Rājasthān.) According to a grant made by Mathanadeva, the local Pratihāra governor in the Alwar region, the grantee was authorised to resume property if the daughter had no issue to inherit it (*a-putrikā-dhana*)¹ or if there was no male heir (*naṣṭi-bharttā* ?)² to succeed to inheritance. The royal right of resumption was thus clearly transferred to the grantee, but occasions for the exercise of this right could not have been many.

The process of individual occupation of land was carried forward by undermining the agrarian rights enjoyed by the village community. In Gupta times land could not be purchased for religious grants by individuals without the consent of the local community and payment to royal officers. But the Pāla kings paid only outward regard to communal rights. Along with vassals and officials all the inhabitants of the village,—right from the brāhmaṇa down to the aborigines and caṇḍālas—were invoked to give their consent (*matam-astu*) to the

1 *EL*, iii, no. 36, l. 12. Presumably it refers to the case in which the deceased donee has no sons and he has not adopted a son of his daughter as his heir.

2 *Ibid.*, the meaning of the term seems to be obscure.

grant made by the Pāla rulers, but that was an empty formality. In fact their consent was taken for granted, and the villagers had to pay a great price for the observance of this fiction. In Gupta times only the Vākāṭaka grants refer to the transfer of rights to the enjoyment of mines, hide and pasturage. This was done by implication, for the villages were exempted from the obligation of supplying these to the state¹. But now these resources were transferred in a positive way to the beneficiaries. Moreover, the practice was no longer confined to Central India, but spread to Eastern India, Uttar Pradesh, Rājasthān, Gujarāt and perhaps also to Mahārāṣṭra. (Under the Pālas² and Pratīhāras³ all agrarian rights such as the use of pasture grounds, fruit trees, reservoirs of water, bushes and thickets, forests, barren land, lowland, land under occasional flood, etc., were transferred to the donees.) There was no sense in specifying these resources of the village in post-Gupta grants unless the idea was to place them at the disposal of the donees.

(Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, however, except for the rows of trees (*sa-vṛkṣa-mālā-kulam*)⁴, which too are mentioned in later grants, no other village resources were specifically transferred to the donees.) But the Rāṣṭrakūṭas did not address the inhabitants of the gift village nor did they specifically enjoin them to pay all dues and to carry out all the orders of the grantees as the Pālas and Pratīhāras did. The fact that the Rāṣṭrakūṭas did not care even to notify formally the inhabitants concerned suggests that they paid scant attention to the village rights. Whatever the form of the Pratīhāra charters might mean there is no doubt that the Pālas and Pratīhāras granted agrarian rights.

1 *CII*, iii, no. 56, ll. 28-29 etc.

2 *EI*, xix, no. 1, B, ll. 41-42.

3 *Ibid.*, iii, no. 36, ll. 10-11 ; *IA*, xviii, p. 34, ll. 5-6.

4 *EI*, vii, no. 6, l. 53.

What did this transfer mean to the villagers? The king had the power to transfer agrarian rights, but of his actual enjoyment the grants do not give any hint. On the other hand in view of traces of communal ownership of land in Gupta times and the analogy of the use of pastures, etc., by the villagers as a whole in recent times, it would appear that these rights benefited the villagers. They could use pasture grounds, water reservoirs, forests, etc., without making any payment to the king; similarly they could extend their arable land in the barren area. But once these agrarian rights were made over to the donees, the villagers could no longer enjoy these advantages without giving some compensation to the recipients for his right of possession. What use the donees made of their rights to village appurtenances and how it added to the burden of peasants can be visualised on the basis of the survivals of some fiscal practices in the 19th century. In some parts of Oudh, where there was valuable timber on the land, the rājā levied an 'axe-tax' on the felling timber from all outsiders¹. In the same area the proprietary body did not take only the rent but also derived profits from the produce of the waste such as thatching grass, fruits, etc., and also from that of fisheries². The 19th century practices suggest that in the earlier period too the grantees levied cesses on forests, grazing grounds, fisheries, fruits, etc. What is more important, the donee could claim the barren land as his family property, depriving the villagers of the opportunity of expansion if they needed more land to feed the increasing number of mouths in their families. So the growth of individual occupancy rights in land among the donees at the cost of the communal agrarian rights was a significant development.

1 Baden-Powell, *Land Systems of British India*, i, 128-29.

2 Ibid., ii, 105.

While the king bartered away the communal rights to the donees and consequently created individual rights in land, sometimes the communities also made over their joint proprietary rights to temples. The case of the town of Gwalior, which gave away several pieces of land to local temples¹, is a good illustration of how communal property was turned into feudal property. The fields were transferred along with the cultivators who tilled them². The two temples of nine Durgās and Viṣṇu, which were endowed with fields, were built by the commander Alla³, and apparently the grant was made by the town under his pressure. We further learn that the whole town of Siyaḍoṇi gave a small field measuring 200 by 225 cubits (*hastas*) to Śrī-Nārāyaṇa-bhaṭṭāraka, established by a merchant, in the southern part of the town⁴. This land grant was not made under any duress, but in both cases the communal landed property was converted into individual property, which tended to be feudal, because the gods and their priests would not cultivate the fields themselves but would get this done by others.

Just as in the Pratīhāra dominions so also in those of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa land was alienated by the communities in favour of temples, and this tended to convert it into private property. Thus in 865 under Amoghavarṣa I 40 *mahājanas* of Eḷpuṇuse in the Dhārwar District gave to a paṇḍita 85 *mattaras* of land⁵. An inscription from Saundatti records a gift of land to a Jain temple, made with the consent of 50 agriculturists⁶. In 951-2 under Kṛṣṇa IV in the Dhārwar District twelve *mattaras*

1 *EI*, i, no. 20, Second Inscr., ll. 2-9.

2 *Ibid.*, i, 8.

3 *Ibid.*, i, 3, 6.

4 *Ibid.*, i, no. 21, ll. 1-4.

5 *EI*, vii, no. 28, D, ll. 7-16.

6 *JBBRAS*, x, 208 quoted in Altekar, op. cit., 362.

of land was granted for the *maṭha* and education, probably with the consent of 50 *mahājanas*, who undertook to protest it¹. Thus it would seem that in Kārṇāṭak local communities, whose leading members were known as *mahājanas*, donated part of their communal land for religious and sometimes for educational purposes, but the grantees tended to establish their individual rights in such land.

(The basic feature of European feudal economy was serfdom, under which peasants were attached to the soil but did not own it. In villages given as grants under the Pālas, Pratīhāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas the position of peasants was not materially different. An important factor which tended to depress the position of peasants was the practice of subinfeudation.) In a Pāla grant from North Bihar an official granted land out of his possession with the permission of his overlord Vighraha-pāla III (1055-70)². Probably as a secular beneficiary he could not do this without the sanction of the king. But the religious donees, particularly the managers of big monasteries such as Nālandā, got their land cultivated by others, and their rents were collected through their agents.

Under the Pratīhāras the grantees enjoyed not only powers of subinfeudation³ but also of eviction. In their dominions, especially in Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt, the beneficiary was given the right to cultivate his benefice or get it cultivated, to enjoy it or to get it enjoyed, to do it or get it done⁴,—a formula which was employed earlier by the Maitraka rulers of Valabhī⁵. It prevailed widely in the dominions of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. This implies that in Rājasthān, Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra

1 *IA*, xii, p. 258, ll. 10-15.

2 *Ibid.*, xxix., no. 8, ll. 49-51.

3 *Ibid.*, v, no. 24, ll. 6-9 ; ix, no. 1, plates A & B.

4 *EI*, ix, no. 1, Plate A, l. 19 ; Plate B, l. 63 ; Cf. iii, p. 264, fn. 6.

5 *CH*, ix, no. 2, l. 6 ; no. 11, l. 13.

the king and his religious grantees could expel tenants from land. Altekar points out that the right of ejection is not mentioned¹, but the terms of the grant presuppose temporary tenants who hold tenure at the discretion of the grantee², who can replace them and get his land cultivated by others. Although eviction could be practised by the king in the villages directly under his control, being men on the spot the grantees could exercise this right more effectively. In the Pratihāra and Rāṣṭrakūṭa dominions, therefore, the peasants did not enjoy security of tenure. Thus in many cases the people who owned the land did not cultivate it. If the law-book of Vyāsa is any guide to the organisation of agrarian economy in early mediaeval India, it would appear that in villages there were sometimes as many as four stages of intermediary landed interests between the king and the cultivator³.

Even the members of the ruling clan did not hold a privileged position in regard to landownership. As time passed Gurjara cultivators were also absorbed in the feudal set-up. They were made to pay all the dues which the local peasants had to pay. This is evident from a religious grant made in 960 by a feudatory, who belonged to the Gurjara-Pratihāra line⁴. The village, which was endowed out of his personal estate Vamśapotakabhoga, was inhabited by a considerable number of Gurjara cultivators⁵. Since the grantee, in this case a guru (and his successive disciples), was empowered to collect from the villagers half a dozen taxes such as a share of the produce (*bhāga*), imposition

1 Altekar, op. cit., pp. 236-7.

2 Cf. Mirashi, *CII*, iv, clxxi.

3 *kṣetram gṛhitvā yaḥ kaścinna kuryānna ca kārayet, svāmine ca ṣaḍaṃ dāpyo rājñe daṇḍam ca tatsamam*. Quoted in *Vyavahāramayūkha*, p. 86.

4 *El*, iii, no. 36, l. 4.

5 *sri-gurjara-vāhita-samasta-kṣetra-sameta-śca*. *Ibid.*, l. 12. It is not clear whether all the inhabitants were Gurjaras.

on the threshing floor (*khala-bhikṣā*), officer's dues (*prasthaka*), *skandhaka*, *mārggaṇaka*, resumption of property on failure of issue (*a-putrikā-dhana*, *naṣṭi-bharttā*), fees on deposits (*nidhi-nidhāna*), along with all the other miscellaneous dues, proper and improper (*ucit-ānucita*)¹ these must have been imposed on the Gurjaras, first by their kinsman overlord, and then by the guru. The present grant shows clearly that the vassal treated his fellow tribesmen as tools meant for his personal enjoyment, and as tillers attached to the soil, capable of being transferred along with it. Further, the grantee could burden the peasants with fair and unfair taxes, which reduced them to the position of serfs. Thus feudal relationships developed not only between the Gurjara-Pratihāras and the conquered population but also within the fold of the conquering tribe itself, for the conquerors regarded their kith and kin not as their equals entitled to an equal share in their spoils but as semi-serfs working for the benefit of their erstwhile tribal leaders.

There are other indications that in Rājasthān the people who cultivated the land did not have any say in its transfer and that the tillers could not leave the soil in case of transfer. On the one hand the beneficiary was given the right of eviction; on the other the peasants were required to stick to the soil in case of its transfer. The two provisions appear to be contradictory so far as the peasants are concerned, but they clearly served the interests of the beneficiaries who enjoyed the discretion of removing or retaining the tenants. The Kāman Stone Inscription of about 905-6 from the former state of Bharatpur, which formed a part of the Pratihāra kingdom certainly under Bhoja I, records eight endowments dating from 786-7 to 905-6 in favour of the local deity Śiva². Of these Document

1 Ibid., ll. 11-12.

2 *EI*, xxiv, 329-33.

No. VI registers that in the village enjoyed by him a person named Untaṭa piously donated three plough measures of land, which had been previously cultivated by the brāhmaṇas Sahulla, Jajja and others but at the time of gift was cultivated by a ploughman called Eḍuvāka¹. This record shows that sometimes even members of the highest varṇa had to work as ordinary cultivators. What makes it more significant is the fact that even a vassal enjoying a single village could transfer land to others along with the ploughmen (*hālikas*) who worked on it, and he did not have to obtain permission from his overlord. This instance proves the existence of serfdom in parts of Rājasthān under the Pratihāras. Since ordinary feudatories could make over the husbandmen along with the ground, the practice may have been fairly widespread.

Another factor which reduced the peasants to a state of serfdom was the extension of the practice of forced labour. The term *viṣṭi*, which means impressed labour, is not mentioned in the Pāla grants. However, in the Pāla kingdom the peasants were subjected to *sarva-pīḍā*², which the king relinquished in the villages made over to the brāhmaṇas, temples and monasteries³. Whether oppressions were perpetrated on the villagers by the grantees, who took the place of the grantors, is not clear.

The Pratihāra feudatories in eastern Kāthiāwāḍ had undoubtedly the right to levy forced labour from the villagers. This was known as *viṣṭi*, and was a privilege which went with the land grant⁴. The practice spread under the Maitrakas of Valabhī in Western India and continued in subsequent times in both Pratihāra and Rāṣṭrakūṭa dominions. The term *s-otapadyamānaviṣṭika* 'produces following from forced labour' or 'forced labour

1 ... *eḍuvāko-dhunā yañ-ca vāhayaty-eva hālikah*, Ibid., no. 45, ll. 19-21.

2 *EI*, xxix, no. I, B, l. 42.

3 Ibid., xvii, no. 17, l. 35.

4 *IA*, xii, pp. 190 ff., Plate II, ll. I-24.

as occasion might arise', first used in the Maitraka charters, was directly borrowed by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas¹. In fact in no area and in no period does forced labour seem to have been as extensive as it was in Gujārāt and Mahārāṣṭra under the Prathihāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. Surprisingly enough it prevailed precisely in the areas in which the donees were granted the right to cultivate the land, to get it cultivated, to enjoy it and to get it enjoyed. Forced labour presupposes lack of manpower, for we cannot think in terms of coercion in areas which are thickly populated. Whatever might be the reasons for the prevalence of forced labour, it did obtain on a considerable scale. It does not, however, seem to have been a substitute for various kinds of royal revenues which are enumerated in detail in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa charters. Probably it supplemented them by providing labour for the construction of forts, etc., as can be inferred from Bhaṭṭasvāmin's explanation of the term *viṣṭi* used in the *Arthasāstra* of Kauṭilya². It is not clear whether the grantees, like the feudal lords of Europe, exacted forced labour and compelled the peasants to work in the plots under their direct cultivation, empowered as they were to cultivate the village, or whether they continued to utilise their services for works which may be regarded as public in nature. Thus we cannot decide the precise implications of the prevalence of forced labour (*utapadyamānaviṣṭi*) under the grantees. At any rate the beneficiaries under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas were granted the positive right of levying forced labour from the villagers; those under the Pālas were granted the negative right of having villages free from all oppressions, but whether they were authorised to indulge in these oppressions themselves is left vague.

We have no means of determining whether the direct burden on the peasants increased under the Pālas and

1 *EI*, xviii, no. 26, ll. 66-67; xxii, no. 13, l. 59.

2 *JBORS*, xii, pt. 1, 198.

Pratīhāras, but the formidable list of taxes imposed on them under the Gāhaḍavālas creates this impression. Since the Pāla grants specify only a few taxes, the rest being covered by the term *ādi* (etcetera)¹, they leave clear room for the imposition by the grantees of fresh taxes on the villagers. They repeatedly refer to the obligation of paying all dues (*samasta-pratyāya*) by the villagers to the grantees, but in the absence of the mention of these dues they could be multiplied and increased by the beneficiaries. The same consideration applies to the Pratīhāra grants which transferred all sources of revenue (*sarv-āya-sameta*), but did not name them. In some parts of the Pratīhāra kingdom (in Rājasthān) the villagers were asked to pay proper and improper, fixed and not fixed, dues to the grantees². Thus empowered the grantees could levy from the villagers taxes other than those which were customary.

In contrast to the Pāla and Pratīhāra grants their Rāṣṭrakūṭa counterparts show precision in transferring revenues and do not leave any scope for increasing the customary dues or charging any additional dues on the part of the grantee. But the beneficial effect of this definition is counteracted by the imposition of at least 7 to 8 varieties of taxes on the villagers. These are *udraṅga*, *uparikara*, *bhūta-vāta-pratyāya*, *dhānya*, *hiranya*, *daṇḍa-daś-āparādha*, and of course *utpadyamāna-viṣṭi*. Whatever these terms might mean in concrete terms, surely each one of them stands for a tax, and all taken together are indicative of the heavy burdens imposed on the Rāṣṭrakūṭa peasants, who continued to pay all these dues even when the villages were transferred to the donees, although the latter did not have the same freedom of action as those under the Pālas and Pratīhāras.

1 *EI* xxix, no. 7, l. 42.

2 *Ibid.*, xii, no. 36, l. 12.

Thus under the grantees the villagers not only suffered from loss of traditional agrarian rights but also from subinfeudation and subleasing, eviction leading to insecure tenancy rights, imposition of forced labour, levy of additional taxes, and forcible attachment to the ground. In some areas the beneficiary was empowered to evict the peasants as well as to make them stick to the soil. The two provisions sound contradictory in relation to the peasants, but they clearly served the interests of the donees who were left free to remove or retain the tenants. All these factors rendered the economic subjection of peasants in benefices as complete as that of their European counterparts.

What strikes us forcibly about the grants is the absence of any legal method or machinery by which the peasants could secure redress of their grievances against the grantees. Almost all Pāla and Pratihāra grants enjoin the villagers to fulfil their obligations towards the grantees by paying them all dues and carrying out their orders. They also instruct the royal successors, and other potential violators of the grants to observe the terms and conditions under the threat of damning spiritual consequences. That this actually worked in practice is evident from the restoration by Bhoja of two *agrahāra* villages, which had slipped from the grasp of the grantees under his predecessors. But we have no trace whatsoever of any obligation of the grantees towards the villagers who were placed under their control. If they chose to levy new taxes or enhance the existing ones, where could the peasants seek relief? Naturally, if the grantees adopted oppressive measures, the villagers might be thrown into a state of helplessness, leading to their greater subjection.

In villages independent of temporal¹ and religious grants taxes were assessed and realised by royal officials.

1 The term 'temporal' has been used for want of a better expression for non-religious or service grants.



We do not know whether the royal officials exacted any dues for their own maintenance from the peasants, but certain dues were levied from the villagers for the maintenance of the royal family under the Pālas. In any case the regular and irregular soldiers and policemen supplemented their earnings with the provisions supplied by the villagers, otherwise there could be no point in exempting the benefices from the entry of such royal agents. As old as the time of the Guptas, the billeting of *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* on the villages covered Bengal, Bihar, Bundelkhand and Chambā during our period. We do not have any precise idea of its operation in earlier times, but what we know of the implications of the entry of the *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* from a record of Chambā (975) shows that villages under the direct control of the king in other parts of the country may also have suffered heavily from the exactions of these royal retainers. The Chambā inscription shows that the *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* could enter the house of a peasant, appropriate a portion of raw and ripe crops, sugarcane, salt and cow's milk; carry off stools, benches or cots; and seize his wood, fuel, grass, chaff, etc¹. There is no reason to believe that they behaved otherwise in other areas.

(Feudalisation of trade and commerce was an important development in the economy under the Pālas and Pratihāras. The markets attached to four villages were made over under Dharmapāla to a grantee², who would not allow as much of a free hand to the traders as the state would do. Several such instances are found under the Pratihāras.) The most prominent example is that of about 34 horse-dealers, who, assembling from different parts of the country at Pehoa, promised to pay a fixed sum of two drammās on the sale of every horse, mule, etc., to six temples³. It is not clear whether the horse-

1 *ASR*, 1902-03, pp. 252-3, ll. 22-24.

2 *EI*, iv, no. 34, ll. 52-53.

3 *Ibid.*, i, no. 23, ll. 1-17.

dealers paid the king any customs over and above what they paid to the temples. This might suggest that customs were transferred to the gods under royal pressure. Again, Undabhaṭa, the governor of Siyaḍoṇi, made over a fixed part of the customs levied on goods to the temple of Viṣṇu¹. Similarly incomes from at least 16 shops were allotted by several merchants to the temple of Viṣṇu at the same place². A land grant made to the temple of Lacchukeśvara in Rājasthān carried with it the levy of three *viṃśopakas* on every sack of grain brought for sale in the market and two *viṃśopakas* per mensem from every shop³. (In the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dominions grants of royal income from crafts are not recorded, but local guilds granted their income for religious purposes.) Thus in 793 the head-man of a guild of weavers at Laxmesvar agreed to make a contribution of the proportionate quantity of the goods turned out by the weavers for a religious gift⁴. In 880 a similar gift was made by four heads of a guild belonging to 360 towns⁵. Such grants may also have been made by the rulers, as was done in the Pāla and Pratīhāra dominions. We do not know whether royal income from tolls and customs was transferred to vassals and officials for their services. But they were certainly granted to temples in return for spiritual benefit.✓

(Transfer of royal income from trade and commerce to the religious beneficiaries was a new development in this period.) In post-Maurya and Gupta times deposits in cash were made with the guilds, and religious needs were met out of the interest accruing on them, so that religious bodies did not enjoy any control over

1 Ibid., no. 21, ll. 4-7.

2 Ibid., ll. 13-34.

3 Ibid., iii, no. 36, ll. 22-23.

4 *EI*, vi, no. 16, ll. 1-12.

5 *JBBRAS*, x, 192 quoted *ibid.*

the management of the donated amount. The old practice was continued under the Pratihāras, who of course deposited money with the heads of guilds and not the guilds. But, what is more important, there also began the practice of transferring tolls levied on sale of commodities or on shops to the temples. Thus the temples came to wield some control over the economic activities of the artisans and merchants which they could regulate in their narrow interests.

(The basic characteristic of feudal economy was local needs locally satisfied, which did not leave scope for specialised production for market.) This seems to be true of villages under the Pālas and Pratihāras. The Jātakas mention craft villages, but whatever little information we have about the composition of the village population under the Pālas suggests that these were not inhabited only by agriculturists but by all varieties of people from brāhmaṇas to Medas, Andhras and caṇḍālas¹. A Pratihāra grant shows that villages near Alwar were populated by artisans, merchants and cultivators². The Pāla and Pratihāra lists of taxes in the countryside show that they could not possibly be levied from the peasants alone; only artisans and traders of the village could pay *kara*, *hiranya*, etc. Thus for the upkeep of the self-sufficient economy of the village it was necessary that all sections of primary producers should live in the village. Even the backward, tribal peoples carried on economic activities useful to the village. In the Pāla villages caṇḍālas may have worked in hide and provided shoes, etc., while the Medas and Andhras probably served as agricultural labourers.

(Monasteries and temples formed wider economic units. According to the terms of the Nālandā grant of Devapāla five villages were given for providing articles

1 Craft villages mentioned in the *Jātakas*, and warrior villages mentioned in the *AS*.

2 *El*, iii, no. 36, ll. 5-6, 22-23.

for worship, clothing, bedding, food and medicine of the monks, and the repair of the monastery¹). There is no reason to think that all these items were met out of the cash rents realised from villagers. In all probability some villages supplied grain, etc., others cloth, and still others requisite labour for the repair of buildings; or else every village furnished part of these articles. Whatever might be the nature of the arrangement in detail, the villages helped sustain the self-sufficient economy of the big monasteries by making various kinds of services available to them.

[In some temples of Rājasthān under the Pratīhāras self-sufficiency in economic resources was secured by consolidating their holdings in land² and ensuring the regular supply of necessary articles from the artisans. We know of oilmen (*tailakas*) making voluntary gifts of a fixed measure of oil per oilmill to a temple³. Other artisans were forcibly attached to the temple to cater for its economic needs. Thus the local Pratīhāra governor Mathanadeva imposed a tax of two *palikās* from every jar (*ghaṭakūpaka*) of clarified butter and oil, and fifty leaves from every Collika for the temple of Lacchukeśvara in Rājasthān⁴. Obviously neither the donor nor the temple possessed sufficient cash for the purpose, and so artisans were compelled to supply a part of their produce to it.

Some towns also seem to have been self-sufficient inasmuch as they owned land from which they procured their food. Artisans living in such towns were not quite free to pursue their trades as they wished. Under the Pratīhāras we find the headmen of the oilmen (*tailikas*), betel-sellers (*tāmbūlikas*), distillers (*kallapāla*), and garland-makers (*mālikā-mahara*) making endowments, and sometimes

1 Ibid., xxiii, no. 47, ll. 39-40.

2 *El*, xiv, p. 177.

3 Ibid., i, no. 21, ll. 27-8, 30-31.

4 Ibid., iii, no. 36, ll. 22-23.

accepting deposits on behalf of their guilds¹. Earlier epigraphs represent the whole guild as accepting deposits, but according to the Pratihāra epigraphs this function had devolved on the chiefs. In consultation with royal agents the head of a guild could impose taxes on its members and undertake transactions on its behalf. This shows that in towns artisans could not function independently but were attached to their chiefs in the same manner as the peasants to their lords in the benefices. This meant lack of mobility, which was an important feature of closed urban economy.

Another indication of the existence of local economic units, particularly in the Pratihāra dominions, is found in the prevalence of local weights and measures, some of which are mentioned in the Siyaḍoṇi inscription. It seems that *maṇi*, *tāli* and *tulā* were local measures of weight². The Gwalior region had its own land measure, which obtained in that area³; and the local land measure was determined according to the hand of the emperor (*paramēś-variya*)⁴. We know of local land measures in Eastern India under the Guptas and Senas. They also existed under the Pālas. Political fragmentation did not favour the evolution of uniform weights and measures, which prevented the development of country-wide trade and commerce.

That trade and commerce was not vigorous in the period can be inferred from the diminished use of coins. The only Pāla grant which mentions the use of drammās is an inscription of Dharmapāla, according to which in 801 a tank was constructed at Gaya at the cost of 3000 drammās, but no coins can be attributed with any certainty to any Pāla king. Recent excavations at a Pāla site near Colgong in Bhagalpur have exposed some

1 *EI*, i, no. 20, Second Inscr., ll. 11-20.

2 B. N. Puri, *The History of the Gurjara-Pratiharas*, pp. 136-7.

3 *EI*, i, no. 20, ll. 8-9.

4 *Ibid.*, l. 4.

cowries but no coins. In view of the continuity of the Pāla rule for nearly four centuries scholars find it hard to explain the absence of coins in their kingdom¹, but it is not surprising if we bear in mind the general nature of the economy prevalent in early mediaeval India.

The Pratihāra inscriptions mention several categories of coins such as *dramma*, *pāda*, *viṃśopaka*, *rūpaka*, *paṇa*, *kākiṇī*, and *kapardaka*². Of these the last was the cowrie, which could not be of much use in considerable transactions. According to Sulaiman cowries were the medium of exchange in the country of Ruhmi and trade was carried through it³. The *dramma* was the only coin capable of undermining the self-sufficient economy of the Pratihāra kingdom. Drammas seem to have been in use in Rājasthān from the 7th century. An inscription of 608 from Mārwar makes the earliest mention of the *dramma*⁴. But under the Pratihāras we do not know of any drammas earlier than the 9th century A.D. Refined silver drammas bearing the device of Ādi-Varāha are attributed to Mihira Bhoja (836-885), and the debased ones are attributed to his two immediate successors, Mahendrapāla (885-910) and Bhoja II (910-914), but not with certainty; recently some coins of Vināyakapāla (914-43), grandson of Mihira Bhoja, have been discovered⁵. They came to be known later as Vināyakamudrā in contrast to the Varāhamudrā of Bhoja I, in the *Dravyaparīkṣā* of Ṭhakkura Pheru⁶, which shows that the two varieties were issued in considerable quantity. But the number of coins hitherto discovered is small.

1 *History of Bengal*, i, p. 668. It is thought that gold coins were used profusely in Assam during the same period, but much cannot be made of only epigraphic references to coins in that region.

2 Puri, op. cit., pp. 134-6.

3 Ibid., p. 136.

4 Asabāya, whose commentary on the *Nārada Smṛti* may be assigned to the 8th century, refers to 1 lac of drammas (*JNSI*, xvii, 66). Reference to the *dramma* in the Bakhshali manuscript may have been earlier.

5 *JNSI*, x, 28-30.

6 Ibid., 29.

Thus the literary and epigraphic sources seem to support the hypothesis that the dramma was not used in any appreciable quantity earlier than the 9th century A. D. Its use increased only from the 10th century onwards. Moreover, the inscriptions show that the use of the dramma was restricted to towns such as Siyaḍoṇi. Furthermore, the coins that have been identified as drammas and recovered so far are negligible in number. There are about 200 Ādi-Varāha and Vigrahapāla coins in the Lucknow Museum, about 20 Ādi-Varāha coins in silver and copper in the Indian Museum, and a few in the Baroda Museum¹. These coins in no way compare with the large number of coins from post-Maurya and Gupta times. At any rate they were not numerous enough to break through the shell of the closed economy prevalent in those times².

The fact that no coins can be attributed with certainty to the Pālas and very few to the Pratihāras suggests that some coins discovered from this period and others mentioned in the contemporary inscriptions may have been issued by local bodies or groups of merchants who were authorised to do so by their respective rulers. This may be true of the *gadhaiyā paisā*, which appeared in Rājasthān possibly from the 10th century and became current in the 11th and 12th centuries. The *pañciyaka-dramma* referred to in the Siyaḍoṇi inscription of the 10th century is taken by Bhandarkar to mean a coin struck by the local panchāyat³. That some drammas had local names in earlier times can be inferred from the use of the Bhillamāla or Śrīmāliya drammas of later times⁴. Thus the issue of coins of local bodies, towns or merchants indicates the disintegration of central power and the prevalence of local economic units.

1 Ibid., p. 153.

2 The present study, however, excludes Kashmir where coins seem fairly numerous.

3 *JNSI*, xvii, 70-71. Now it is thought to be 1/4 dramma.

4 *JNSI*, xvii, 74-75.

Further proof of the use of coins is found in epigraphic references to the purchase of shops. In Rājasthān eight inscriptions ranging from 864 to 904 refer to the purchase of shops for cash made by the management of temples¹. But during this period hardly any coin series can be definitely associated with the ruling dynasties of the Pālas, Pratihāras and Rāṣṭrakūṭas, not to speak of minor dynasties, a state of affairs very different from that prevailing in the days of the Indo-Greeks, Kuṣāṇas, Sātavāhanas, Kṣatrapas, and above all the Guptas. However, the available coins, and the references to them in the Pratihāra inscriptions, convey the impression that the Pratihāra economy was not so closed as its Pāla counterpart. There are also some other indications of mobility and economic intercourse. At least at two places in the Pratihāra kingdom merchants from different parts of the country gathered,—horse-dealers at Pehoa and general merchants at Ahar. Moreover, some merchants migrated from place to place. This mobility of merchants must have weakened the feudal economy under the Pratihāras.

It is remarkable that not a single Rāṣṭrakūṭa coin has been discovered so far although they ruled for over 200 years, although their kingdom touched the sea-coast, and although the term *hiranya* is repeatedly mentioned in their land charters. Altekar considers this to be a strange phenomenon², but the same is true of the Pālas to whom not a single coin can be ascribed indisputably in spite of their rule for about four centuries. The conspicuous absence of Rāṣṭrakūṭa coins can be appreciated if we remind ourselves of the nature of mediaeval economy. The lack of coins has been explained by Altekar himself when he states that land tax in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom was mostly paid in kind, as in the Gaṅga and Coḷa dominions³. Of course the Cambay

1 *EI*, xix, no. 7, pp. 52-58.

2 *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their times*, p. 364.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 227 cf. p. 140.

plates of Govinda IV mention a gift of 1400 villages (600 *agrahāras* and 800 villages) yielding an annual revenue of 7 lacs of *suvarṇas*¹, but this is just an estimate of the annual income in terms of money. Probably assessment was made in terms of cash, but realisation in kind.

The articles handled by the merchants under the Pālas and Pratihāras were not of day-to-day use, touching the life of the common people. Certainly trade in horses, betel, etc., could not affect the rural economy. The only important necessity of daily use required by the villages was salt. The Siyaḍoṇi inscription leads us to suppose that in the Pratihāra kingdom salt merchants were the most important of all dealers. It mentions as many as seven *nemika-vaṇikas*, some credited with the establishment of temples and others with their endowments. If the economy had not been self-sufficient, dealers in grain and cloth would have been more important. Even people living in towns owned land in the neighbourhood, and probably depended on the produce received from such land. This seems to be true of traders living in Siyaḍoṇi² and Gwalior³. It is a strong indication of the self-sufficient rural economy that of the various kinds of merchants those dealing in salt appear as the most important under the Pratihāras. The only other important merchants in the Pratihāra records are the oilmen or *tailikas*, whose presence again reflects a self-sufficient economy. Probably every village did not produce all the oil necessary for cooking and lighting, which had to be supplied by the oilmen.

To conclude we can sum up four broad developments in early mediaeval economy : (i) growth of individual ownership of land at the cost of royal and communal

1 *EI*, vii, no. 6, ll. 47-49.

2 *EI*, i, no. 21, ll. 3-4.

3 *Ibid.*, no. 20, Second Inscr., l. 3.

ownership ; (ii) subjection of peasantry through sub-infeudation, eviction, and imposition of non-customary taxes and forced labour ; (iii) conversion of income from trade and crafts into benefices ; and finally (iv) the existence of a self-sufficient economy buttressed by lesser use of coins and comparative absence of trade. All these may be regarded as features of feudal economy under the Pālas, Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Pratihāras. Of these the existence of intermediaries in land, whose number increased enormously during this period, may be regarded an old feudal phenomenon. ✓ The same is true of the subjection of peasantry through various processes, with the difference that subleasing, eviction and forced labour were intensified in Rājasthān, Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra. But the loss of agrarian and communal rights by the villagers leading to the growth of individual rights in land, feudalisation of crafts and commerce, and paucity of coins appear to have been new traits in the economy of the period. Some of the developments, especially the growth of individual rights in land, can be better appreciated if we examine the legal basis of land grants in early mediaeval times.



CHAPTER IV

EARLY MEDIAEVAL LAND RIGHTS

(c. A.D. 500-1200)

The problem of land rights in early India has been enmeshed in the controversy between imperialist and nationalist historians. In order to justify land legislation in British India administrator scholars sought to prove the existence of royal ownership of land in ancient India¹. The theory was upheld by Maine and supported even by serious orientalist scholars such as Bühler², Hopkins, Macdonell and Keith, and V. A. Smith³. In 1904 V. A. Smith stated in his popular textbook that "the native law of India has always recognised agricultural land as being crown property⁴." Completely one-sided, such an approach aroused a similar reaction on the part of nationalist historians such as P. N. Banerjee⁵ and K. P. Jayaswal. The latter tried to refute this theory and prove the individual ownership of land⁶, apparently to withstand the onslaughts of the British on the right of the big land-holders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The nationalist theory of Jayaswal was, however, countered by Ghoshal, but he did not proceed beyond the interpretation of certain passages

1 As Kane puts it, being more convenient and paying the theory of state ownership of land was adopted by the British Government in their policy and legislation. *HDS*, ii, 866.

2 *SBE*, XXV, 259-60, note on *Manu*, VIII. 39.

3 *Early History of India* (Oxford, 1904), p. 123; *Oxford History of India*, p. 90.

4 *Early History of India*, (Oxford, 1904), p. 123.

5 *Public Administration in Ancient India*, p. 179.

6 *Hindu Polity*, II n. edn., pp. 343-51.

quoted by the former in support of his theory¹. The subject has been treated recently by some other scholars², mainly on the theoretical plane. Although these studies have brought to light most legal texts bearing on the ownership or possession of land, these have not been interpreted in any chronological order, let alone in the context of the political and economic developments of the period to which they belong. No attempt has been made to approach the problem in terms of changes, if any, in the idea of land rights, and no line of demarcation in this respect has been drawn between the ancient period and the mediaeval period, which in our opinion begins from the end of the Gupta age. What has made the study of this question more difficult is that, guided by recent practice, modern scholars always think in terms of absolute rights in land and ignore the possibility of the varying rights of various parties, based more on custom than on any well-established law.

Since in the treatment of the subject the evidence for early mediaeval times has not been examined separately, we propose to confine our study mainly to this period. It may help to clarify our understanding if we examine the various forms of land rights, communal, royal and individual, one by one.

(From Vedic down to Gupta times the ancient Indian texts show consciousness of communal rights in land.) According to a latter Vedic text, the *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa*, the Earth protested against the action of Viśvakarman Bhauvana, who donated land to the priests as sacrificial³. It seems that in Vedic times no land could be

1 *The Beginnings of Indian Historiography and other Essays*, Essay VI, pp. 158-66.

2 S. K. Maity, *Economic Life of Northern India in Gupta Period*, pp. 11-23.
L. Gopal, *JESHO*, iv, 240-63.

3 VIII. 21.

donated without the consent of the clan,¹ and except the case of Viśvakarman Bhauvana no other instance of the gift of land, even with the consent of the clan, is known in Vedic times. Gautama, a lawgiver of post-Vedic times, lays down that what is considered as livelihood (*yoga-kṣema*) cannot be divided². This obviously includes land, which according to this rule cannot be divided among the members of the family. In the same passage of Gautama the term is taken to mean property destined for pious uses and sacrifices, but this seems to be a later interpretation³.

In post-Vedic times, alongside clan rights in land, there developed the rights of those who did not belong to the clan. With the formation of villages peopled by members of various clans and crafts, the village community came to acquire some rights in land. The individual appropriation of land was subject to some effective communal control. Probably the old communal, anti-alienising feeling regarding the disposal of land persisted in the villages in pre-Maurya times⁴.

The idea of communal rights in land is fully confirmed by an important Sanskrit text on logic, the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* of Jaimini, assignable to the 4th-3rd century B.C. It states that in the Viśvajit sacrifice, in which the sacrificer has to donate all his belongings, even an emperor cannot give away the whole land of which he may be the ruler, for the earth is common to all⁵. This has been taken by scholars to establish the right of the individual in land⁶, but the statement is obviously intended to convey the contrast between the private rights of one and the public rights of many. Śabara Svāmin, who commented on this passage in the 4th

1 *CHI*, i, 118.

2 *XXVIII*. 46.

3 *SBE*, ii, fn. 46 on *XXVIII*. 46.

4 *CHI*, i, 178.

5 *VI*. 7.3 quoted in *DK*, i, 793.

6 K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, 2 edn., p. 345.

century A.D., argues that others have as much right over the earth as the king¹, which implies the theory of joint rights in land.

So far as the brāhmaṇa clans are concerned several mediaeval texts repeatedly stress that amongst other things land and water belonging to persons having a common ancestor (*sagotras*) are indivisible up to the thousandth generation². This obviously refers to the state of affairs before Gupta times, for no pre-Gupta law-book provides for the partition of land in connection with the laws of inheritance. But once the law of partition of land had been clearly written into Gupta and post-Gupta Dharmaśāstras, the old provision regarding the impartibility of land sounded incongruous. The commentators got round this anomaly simply by ignoring the obvious and literal meaning of the passage. The *Mitākṣarā*³ and the *Madanapārijāta*⁴ argued that the provision regarding the indivisible land (*kṣetra*) of the brāhmaṇa clan applied only to the kṣatriya and other sons born of the brāhmaṇa, which implies that the brāhmaṇa sons could divide the landed property among themselves. This clearly illustrates how the provision regarding clan rights in land was cleverly twisted in favour of individual rights although these were denied to the kṣatriya and other non-brāhmaṇa sons of the brāhmaṇa on grounds of caste. Devaṇṇa-bhaṭṭa, a lawgiver of about the 13th century, seems to accept the interpretation of the *Mitākṣarā*, and commenting on the crucial passage baldly states that land can be divided; but he adds that this can only be done with the consent of all the kinsmen (*akhilā-dāyād-ānumatyā*)⁵. Thus what is merely implied by the

1 On Jaimini, VI. 7.3, quoted in *DK*, i, 793.

2 *DK*, i, 1231.

3 *yat-t-ūśanasā kṣetra-syāvibhōjyatuam-uktam-avibhōjyam-iti.*

tad-brāhmaṇ-otpanna-kṣatriy-ādi-putro-viśayam. *DK*, i, 1232.

4 *Ibid.*, 1231.

5 *Ibid.*, 1232.

Mitākṣarā is declared in unequivocal terms by the *Smṛticandrikā* of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa. Hence the legal texts of the 11th-13th centuries clearly provide for the break-up of landed property owned by the brāhmaṇa families. And what applied to brāhmaṇa families may also have been true of other families.

The laws regarding settlement of boundary disputes and sale of land give the community a strong voice in land transactions. In settling boundary disputes the law-books enjoin mediation by kinsmen (*jñāti*) and neighbours (*sāmantas*) but also admit the evidence of cultivators, artisans and even hunters. Land for sale can be transferred only with the consent of the village, *jñāti* and *dāyādas*¹. Further, in the sale of land near kinsmen, neighbours and creditors (*dhanikāḥ*) have to be considered in order of preference², then the kinsmen in general (*sakulyas*), and if none of all these is available men of other castes can be thought of³.

It is laid down by Brhaspati that when the king makes the gift of a field (it is not clear whether a secular or religious gift), he should inform the knowers of four Vedas, merchants, elders, all villagers, elders, owners and royal officers⁴,—an instruction which is usually followed in the land charters and indicates some interest of the inhabitants of the village in land. In the Gupta period in a land transaction for religious purposes the consent of the village assembly had to be obtained. Similarly in the 9th century a town near Gwalior granted to a temple some land which it held in common. Such examples of the exercise of communal rights are few. But certainly the form was maintained even by powerful kings, who addressed the grants not only to their officers

1 *DK*, i, 901 (*sva-grāma-jñāti-sāmanta-dāyād-ānumatena ca*).

2 Bharadvāja quoted in *DK*, i, 900.

3 *Ibid*.

4 *rājā kṣhetraṃ datvā cāturvaidya-vanig-cūrika-sarva-grāmiṇa-tan-mahottara-svāmi-puruṣ-ādhiṣṭhitaṃ paricehindyāt*, quoted in *DK*, i, 949.

and vassals but also to humbler folk including caṇḍālas, Medas and Andhras. Some grants from Bengal and Orissa sought the consent of all ; others merely informed all categories of the village population of the transfer. This was evidently a survival of the communal rights of earlier days when land was owned jointly by the members of a tribe. But even when the tribe had disintegrated into castes and different tribes had coalesced to form one village the old form was retained.

It was under the pretext of communal welfare that land was enjoyed by the priests and temples. An important reason why sale was permitted for religious purposes was that the temple was supposed to function in the interest of the community. Apparently not only the priests but also the lay devotees partook of the offerings made in connection with the *bali* and *sattra*, for which land was granted to the temples. Even now offerings made to the gods are distributed among the villagers who congregate around the local temple on the occasion of the daily and periodical worship. It is likely that in ancient times a major part of the offerings was distributed among the devotees. Gradually the priests appropriated the lion's share and shared only a small portion of the produce of the donated land with their real benefactors.

So far as pasture grounds are concerned two pre-Gupta lawgivers, Manu and Viṣṇu, clearly lay down¹ that grazing land cannot be partitioned. Communal rights in water reservoirs, etc., are indicated by the provision that *udaka* cannot be divided². Inscriptions indirectly show that the people had some such rights, but later laws and grants contrived to undermine these.

Communal rights in land seem to have been first curtailed by the king. The Viśvakarman passage is clear evidence that this was happening very early. It

1 DK. i, 1209.

2 Ibid., 1204, 1206, 1209.

evidently represents the traditional view which did not like the way kings were arrogating increasing rights to themselves. The king, as the representative of the community, was gradually clothed with the rights enjoyed by it, although his authority could never be absolute. In any event whatever little of clan or communal rights in land remained in early mediaeval times was undermined by the growth of royal and individual rights, which process is attested by both the law-books and the land charters of the period.

Those who argue for the existence of royal ownership of land in early India try to stretch the evidence over the whole period, little realising that most law-books which stress royal rights belong to early mediaeval times. Kautilya recommends royal control of agriculture¹, but he nowhere enunciates the theory of ownership of land by the king. Manu seems to have been the first authority to speak in general terms of the supreme power of the king over the earth, which does not necessarily imply royal ownership of land. According to him the king is entitled to half a share of the ore dug out of mines. as he is the lord of the earth and gives protection². This is somewhat different from the older theory which adduces no other ground for levying taxes than giving protection to the people. The first clear statement of royal possession is made by a late Gupta lawgiver Kātyāyana, who declares the king to be the owner of the earth (*bhūsvāmin*) and consequently the claimant to one-fourth of the produce³. However, he admits that because they dwell on the land human beings are declared to be the owners of it (in ordinary parlance⁴), and so dilutes his theory of the royal ownership of land with that of the ownership by ordinary inhabitants. A similar position is taken

1 *AS*, II. 24.

2 VIII. 39.

3 *Kātyāyanasmṛti*, Verse 16.

4 Verse 17.

by Nārada, who authorises the king to deprive the peasant of his field and house but at the same time advises him not to resort to such a drastic measure, for these two constitute the means of the subsistence of the householder¹. Explaining the second injunction of Nārada, Asahāya states that the king should acquire his own (*svam*) by giving seeds, etc., to the peasant², which implies that relief to the peasants can ensure the realisation of the royal share of the produce. The pretence in favour of the peasants is given up by the commentator to the *Narasimha Purāṇa*, who states that the land belonged to the king and not to the cultivators³. Bhaṭṭasvāmin, who flourished some time in the 12th century, quotes a significant passage in his commentary on Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*. According to it those who are well versed in the śāstras admit that the king is the owner of both land and water and that the people can exercise their right of ownership over all things except these two⁴. This passage accords well with the view of the commentator of the *Narasimha Purāṇa* and contrasts the rights of the king with those of his subjects⁵; instead of subordinating the right of the subject in the soil to those of the king it completely does away with them. Since the crucial passage occurs in the context of taxes from irrigation,

1 XI. 27, 42.

2 On *Nar.* XIV. 42 quoted in *DK.* i, 949.

3 Quoted in M. A. Buch, *Economic Life in Ancient India*, ii, 24f. (quoting from *Lees, Land and Labour of India*, pp. 111-4). Also Sen, *Hindu Jurisprudence*, p. 52f. The same inference may be drawn from the commentary of the *Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj.*, l. 318. According to it the privilege of making a gift of land or of a *nibandha* belonged only to the king and not to the governor of province or a district under the king.

4 *AS* (4th edn.), tr., p. 144.

5 Ghoshal, *Historiography and other Essays*, p. 160. Confirmation of the theory of royal ownership of land is provided by the *Mānasollāsa*, i, (GOS XXVIII), Ch. III, verse 361, which declares the king to be the lord (*īvara*) of all wealth, especially of that which is stored inside the earth.

its citation by Bhaṭṭasvāmin is obviously intended to justify taxation on the grounds of ownership.

Although the private individual was allowed to lease his land to tenants from the 5th century A.D. the king could superimpose his own rights over that land. Yājñavalkya (II. 158)¹ lays down that if the cultivator does not cultivate after having taken the field, he shall be compelled to pay the owner's share; nothing is said about the royal share. But in such a case Brhaspati² and Vyāsa³ enjoin the tenant to pay the due share not only to the landowner (*svāmin*) but also an equivalent fine to the king. Of course neglect of cultivation means loss in revenue, but for this the king should hold the landowner responsible and not the tenant. The fact that he enters into direct dealings with the tenants shows that he enjoys some general authority over their land. Normally Nārada permits legal title to the land if it has been enjoyed for three generations. But here also royal rights infringe individual rights, for such a piece of land can be transferred to another person through royal favour (*rāja-prasādāt*). So on the one hand the king is authorised to deprive a person of his land and house even if they have been under occupation for sixty years; on the other he is empowered to assign them to another person. Such a provision has in view the transfer of land by the king from one assignee to the other.

(From the Gupta period onwards the Chinese travellers Fa-hsien and Hsüan Tsang record that land belonged to the king. While the actual position might differ from king to king, there is little to doubt that in early mediaeval times there existed a strong school favouring the royal ownership of land. K. P. Jayaswal takes the theory of the royal ownership of land in ancient

1 *DK*, i, 943.

2 *Ibid.*, i, 954.

3 *Ibid.*, 961.

India as a part of the feudal law¹, but so far as the Gupta and post-Gupta legal texts are concerned, the evidence for royal ownership of land cannot be ignored. Its only critic was Śabara, who flourished some time in the 3rd-4th century A.D. and belonged to the school of Jaimini,

It may be argued that the king enjoyed only usufructuary rights which were transferred to the donors. This may be true of the early grants, which make over certain sources of revenues in the villages. But the post-Gupta grants transfer villages along with its water, paths, fertile, infertile and low land, trees, grass, etc., which, in the case of Maratha grants, has been taken by the modern Indian courts to have conferred on the grantee ownership in the soil itself²; on the other hand where these concessions are not specified the grant is considered to be of the royal share of the revenue only³. The same interpretation should apply to early mediaeval land grants. If the king did not enjoy ownership in the soil how could he transfer it to others?

(The king may have acquired rights over the soil as the representative of the community, but he was never conscious of it in early mediaeval times. In this sense royal ownership was not identical with state ownership. The kings, who made grants in all parts of their kingdoms, always did so with the avowed object of securing religious merit for themselves and their parents; they never cared for the spiritual benefit of the community and the kingdom. Hence land was granted by them in their individual capacity, as private landowners.)

The Vedic, post-Vedic, Maurya and post-Maurya texts

1 *Hindu Holity* (2nd edn.), 349. He quotes Wilks (*History of Mysore*, 1869) as showing that no foundation exists for attributing the feudal theory to Hindu Law (*ibid.*).

2 *HDS*, ii, 865-6.

3 *Ibid.*, iii, 855, fn. 2031 for case references.

indicate the appropriation and occupation of cultivable land by private individuals, which can be taken as an illustration of individual rights in land. But except for gift for religious purposes the early sources do not authorise the individual to alienate his land for any other purpose. In other words the other usual characteristics of ownership such as sale, mortgage, partition, inheritance, etc., do not apply to arable land. These attributes of ownership are known to some pre-Gupta lawgivers such as Gautama¹ and Manu², but neither they nor other lawgivers such as Āpastamba, Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha and Viṣṇu allow an individual the power of alienating or acquiring land by gift, sale, mortgage, partition, etc. (It is only from the Gupta period onwards that the law-books lay down provisions regarding partition, sale, mortgage, adverse possession, and lease of land.)

(Although the pre-Gupta law-books provide detailed laws regarding partition, they do not mention land in this context. It is Bṛhaspati³, a lawgiver of the later Gupta period, who clearly states that in partition land cannot be given to a śūdra son of a higher caste father, a view repeated by Devala⁴, a lawgiver of about A.D. 600-900.) Kātyāyana⁵, a near contemporary of Bṛhaspati, declares that when the field, garden, houses, etc., are partitioned the eldest should get either the southern or the western part. Śaṅkha-Likhita, whose law-book was compiled some time between A.D. 600-900, states that if somebody acquires by dint of his labour, land that had been lost, he should get one fourth more, and the rest should be equally divided among the

1 X. 39.

2 X. 115.

3 *DK*, i, 1251.

4 *Ibid.*, 1252.

5 *Ibid.*, 1201.

sharers¹. These rules leave no doubt about the partition of land from Gupta times.

Even pasture land, made indivisible by Manu² and Viṣṇu³, is pronounced to be divisible by Bṛhaspati⁴. The legal sanction for the partition of pasture grounds is significant, because vast stretches of land owned by joint families could be brought under private possession by this means. Thus from the end of the Gupta period onwards land could be partitioned among individuals, who were given separate possessions over it.

A second indication of the growth of individual rights in land is provided by the law regarding sale. Kauṭilya prescribes rules regarding the sale of homestead and houses (*vāstu-vikraya*)⁵, but he does not refer to the sale of land, which was apparently not in vogue in Maurya times. Similarly the detailed rules regarding sale and purchase in the pre-Gupta law-books do not mention land as a commodity. Even some Gupta lawgivers such as Yājñavalkya and Nārada do not refer to the sale of land. These two set varying periods for the examination of the things purchased, i.e. iron and clothes, milch cattle, beasts of burden, jewels, all sorts of grain, male and female slaves, but they do not include land in this category.⁶ Bṛhaspati seems to have been the first lawgiver to lay down rules regarding the sale of land⁷, and he is followed by Kātyāyana and others. Kātyāyana ordains that if a field which has been given, purchased or pledged becomes invalid, one of

1 Ibid., 1207 with the com. of *Smṛticandrikā*.

2 IX. 219. The term used for pasture ground according to Medhātithi is *pracāra*.

3 XVIII. 44.

4 DK, i, 2, 1223. The term *pracāra* is explained by Aparārka as *praveśa-nirgama-bhūḥ* (ibid.).

5 III. 9.

6 *Tāj.*, II. 177 ; *Nār.*, XII. 5-6.

7 DK, i, 896.

equal value should be given¹. If the vendor is incapable of doing this he should give satisfaction in other ways². Kātyāyana further enjoins that land intended for purchase should be carefully examined³, an instruction repeated by later lawgivers⁴. Kātyāyana lays down that tax-bearing land should be sold for the purpose of realising taxes⁵, which implies that the peasant could be compelled to sell a part of his land for the clearance of his dues.

Some other provisions of Bṛhaspati⁶, Bharadvāja⁷, and Aparārka⁸ clearly show that land was liable to sale in early mediaeval times. Bṛhaspati provides that in the case of sale, wells, trees, water-ways, fields, ripe crops, eatable fruits, ponds, toll houses, etc. should be mentioned⁹. We wonder whether this refers to the purchase of a whole village. In the 12th century we have clear legal sanction for this in the work of Lakṣmīdhara, who explains the disposal or sale of *sthāvara* as that of a village, fields, etc¹⁰. Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa, another authority of the same century, quotes a verse to the effect that when the village is sold along with its boundaries, water and paths, the priesthood and village deity are not to be destroyed¹¹.

(By the thirteenth century when the *Vyavahāranirṇaya* of Varadarāja was compiled, the sale of land was recognised to be a well-established practice, for this text declares land, house and the like to be '*panya*', saleable

1 Ibid., 767.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 896.

4 Ibid., 899.

5 DK, i, 898.

6 Ibid., 895.

7 Ibid., 757. They refer here to the unauthorised sale of land.

8 Ibid., 761.

9 Ibid., 896.

10 *Vyavahāraśāstram* quoted, *ibid.*, 886.

11 *Smyticandrikā*, 23, quoted in DK, i, 947.

commodities—a term which is hardly applied to land in earlier times¹. Provisions do not rule out the sale of land for secular purposes. Instances of such sales in post-Gupta times even for religious purposes are lacking probably on account of the lesser use of coins, and the growing legal provisions regarding sale in the 12th and 13th centuries can be linked up with the revival of currency and trade during that period. The significant provision for the sale of whole villages indicates their ownership by individuals and reminds us of the big landholders of feudal Europe.)

A field is not represented as a form of pledge in Gautama, Manu, Yājñavalkya and Nārada². The first to do so is Bṛhaspati, who defines the use of a mortgaged house or the produce of a field as *bhogalābha* (interest by enjoyment)³. Several provisions regarding the enjoyment of fields are found not only in Bṛhaspati but also in Kātyāyana. Kātyāyana ordains that the boundaries of the house or land to be pledged and the villages or the countries in which they are situated must be defined⁴. This instruction was followed in the case of villages made over as religious gifts and probably also in secular transactions. Bṛhaspati states that when a field or other immovable property has been enjoyed and the principal and interest has been actually realised from it by the creditor, the debtor receives back his pledge⁵. This shows that in the case of debt land was given towards the payment of both the principal and the interest. Kātyāyana adds that the debtor can get back his field, etc. transferred for enjoyment as interest from the creditor on paying back the amount he had taken⁶.

1 *HDS*, iii, 495, fn. 878.

2 I. 125.

3 XI. 7-8.

4 Verse 522.

5 XI. 23.

6 Verse 516.

(The practice of mortgaging land on interest is attested by several post-Gupta sources.) Thus Asahāya (700-750), commenting on two kinds of pledge mentioned by Nārada (I. 125), gives a house and a field as instances of a pledge for use¹. Similarly commenting on *Manu*, VIII. 143, Medhātithi states that a cow is given as *ādhi* to the creditor for using its milk, and a piece of land or garden is given as *ādhi* for enjoying its produce ; hence the creditor is not entitled to any *ṛddhi* or *kuśīda*. Vyāsa, who probably belonged to the same period as Medhātithi, explains *ādhi* in the same way. When somebody accepts money (*dravya*) having settled interest on it and asks the creditor to enjoy his field in return for interest and to apply the excess profit towards the payment of principal, it is called *ādhi* or *sa-pratyāya-bhogy-ādhiḥ* ; it is released when twice the amount is paid². Even where land is not pledged it can be sold to clear off his debts. According to Bharadvāja, if the debtor is unable to pay off his debts his property is to be sold for payment, and this includes his land, fields, garden and house³.

This again points to the practice of pledging land for payment of debts, which must have added to the landed property of the creditors. It is even stated that pledges of land can be enjoyed for one hundred years. Provisions for pledge could be effective only with the growing use of money in the 11th-12th centuries, and an epigraphic instance of this belongs to the beginning of the 13th century in Central India.

(Rules regarding loss of ownership on account of adverse possession are another indication of private rights. Gautama⁴ and Manu⁵ lay down that if a stranger has been in possession of property for 10 years, the owner

1 *SBE*, xxxiii, 73.

2 *DK*, i, 658.

3 *Ibid.*, 731.

4 *HDS*, iii, 320, fn. 456.

5 VIII. 147-8. *Nār.*, iv. 79-80 also refers to the ten-year rule and so also *Saṅkha*, *HDS*, iii, 320.

loses legal title to it. Yājñavalkya raises this period to 20 years¹, but none of these lawgivers mentions land in this context. We notice a significant change in Viṣṇu², Nārada³, Bṛhaspati⁴ and Kātyāyana⁵, who raise the period to three generations or roundly to sixty years and specifically apply this rule to the possession of land. (Later, in the 11th century, the *Mitākṣarā* raises it to 100 years⁶, and the *Smṛticandrikā*, a work of the 13th century, to 105⁷ years.) Apparently from the Gupta period onwards these provisions give more and more security to holders of landed property till the concept of individual ownership of land becomes strongly entrenched by the end of the early mediaeval period. The rules reflect the situation in which, though the land of an individual or even of the king might be occupied without legal title by his tenants or by some powerful neighbour for 100 years, the original owner of the land would not be deprived of his rights.

Such provisions may have borne heavily upon temporary peasants, cultivating plots of land. To prescribe a longer period indicates an attempt to make tenant proprietorship very difficult in times of political chaos. Taking advantage of this rule tenants of long standing could be dispossessed of their fields by the secular and religious grantees, if there was even a short break in their tenancy or occupancy. It is easy to prove possession for a shorter period on the basis of memory, but nobody can vouchsafe from his memory that a particular piece of land has been in the possession

1 II. 24.

2 V. 187.

3 I. 91.

4 IX. 27-30. *Br.* here refers to the possession of immovable property and not specifically of land.

5 Verse 327.

6 On *Yāj.*, II. 27.

7 Text in *HDS*, iii, 321, fn. 459.

of a person even for 60 years, not to speak of 100 years. In this sense the provisions regarding adverse possession helped the existing landholders but hindered the growth of the proprietary rights of tenants.

(Individual rights in land are further proved by laws regarding the lease of land to tenants. Early law-books seek to govern the relations with hired agricultural labourers, who could be even beaten, and with sharecroppers who were bound to change frequently.) But except a passage of Āpastamba¹, which is capable of different interpretations, there is hardly any early provision governing the relations between the landowner and the leaseholder. From the Gupta period onwards, however, the law-books regulate the relation between the owners of land (*svāmin*) on the one hand and the *kṣetrika* or *karṣaka* on the other. Most Gupta and post-Gupta lawgivers stress the obligation of the tenants to cultivate the fields leased to them and to pay the fixed share to the owner even when they neglected cultivation². Several texts also enjoin that negligent tenants should pay a fine to the king³. In case of neglect the *Mitākṣarā* provides that the field should be taken away and given to another cultivator⁴. Thus the owner had the right to change his tenant. The owner's share known as *kṛṣṭa-phala* or *sada* differs according to the nature of the land. If it has been out of cultivation for a long time his share is 1/10th of the produce, if cultivated it is 1/8th, and if well-cultivated it is 1/6th⁵. The law obviously concerned such tenants as invested their own capital, implements, seeds, labour, etc., in the fields, and not sharecroppers who were supplied with part of the agricultural expenses in return for which the owner was entitled to a larger share of the produce. If, however, the barren land is

1 DK, i, 842.

2 Ibid., 943, 954, 961.

3 Ibid., 954, 961.

4 Ibid., 943.

5 Ibid., 954.

to be brought under cultivation for the first time, the owner is supposed to bear all its expenses. If he does not do so, for eight years the tenant is asked to give him only 1/8th of the produce, and after the end of that period he is instructed to return the land to the owner.

All these provisions give a fair indication of growing individual rights in land. But those regarding mortgage, adverse occupation and sale seem to favour big land-owners rather than ordinary peasant proprietors. In any case the steady growth of the idea of private land-ownership in early mediaeval times may be taken as an important factor in feudal polity and economy, which was based on an unequal distribution of land among the individuals.

(A survey of the evidence regarding land rights from the early centuries of the Christian era to the twelfth century shows that the legal texts contain only faint traces of communal rights. On the contrary they increasingly sanction royal as well as individual rights in land, which appear to be contradictory. Attempts made by mediaeval commentators and modern writers to reconcile the two forms of ownership do not seem to have been successful, but the context of the distribution of land in early mediaeval times may help us to resolve the contradiction. The theory of royal ownership served to justify large scale royal land grants to priests and temples, vassals and officials, in return for their services, just as the theory of individual ownership could enable the grantees to lease land to tenants and subtenants. Otherwise how can we explain four stages in the occupation and possession of a single plot of land? The epigraphic evidence shows that the sale of land was limited to religious gifts, and the paucity of coins in early mediaeval times rules out the possibility of sale of land on any considerable scale, at least up to A.D. 1000. Further, the theory of royal ownership fortified the mediaeval princes in levying all varieties

of taxes from the peasants. Both theories undermined communal rights in land and paved the way for the transformation of large stretches of pasture grounds or other forms of communal land into private property at the hands of grantees and big landowners, thus reducing ordinary peasants to the position of serfs or helpless dependants on the new landholders. Both theories therefore were eminently suited to the feudal set-up of the mediaeval age.)

(The theory of the royal ownership of land is hardly different from that of the private ownership of land, and should not be confused with state ownership, which may create the impression that land was held by the king in the interests of the community. In fact the king is represented as the greatest landowner, and all the others appear as lesser landowners under him.) Naturally we have here a system of graded rights in land, which includes the *rājā*, the *svāmin* and the *karṣaka*. The obligations of all these in respect of land are set forth in varying degrees. Our finding fits in with the conclusion of J.D.M. Derrett. According to him "Indian jurists took it for granted that the incidents of particular manifestations of ownership might differ, while the *svatva* (rights) of the king, the *svatva* of the landowner, the *svatva* of the tenant-farmer, and in an extreme case, even the *svatva* of the mortgagee in possession (as against a trespasser) were all comprehensible under the single term of property¹". That several parties held their respective interests in the one and the same piece of land is exemplified by the Ashrafpur copper-plate grants of about the 7th-8th century from East Bengal. We learn that a plot which was enjoyed by Śarvāntara and cultivated by Śikhara and others was donated by the king to the Buddhist

1 *Bulletin of the School of the Oriental and African Studies*, xviii, 489.



monk Saṅghamitra¹. Therefore at least three parties, the king, Śarvāntara who was in the enjoyment of that field, and Śikhara and other peasants who were cultivating it, enjoyed rights in the same piece of land before it was given to the Buddhist teacher.

The whole system reminds us of the mediaeval European law of landed property which conceived the soil as being subject to a great number of real rights differing among themselves and superimposed². "The tenant who—from father to son, as a rule—ploughs the land and gathers in the crop; his immediate lord to whom he pays dues and who, in certain circumstances, can resume possession of the land; the lord of the lord, and so on, right up the feudal scale—how many persons there are who can say, each with as much justification as the other, "That is my field"³." In early mediaeval India the parties having rights over the ground may not have been as many as in the West, but all the same their interests were recognised by law and in this regard the condition was similar to that in feudal Europe.

But land rights in Muslim India were certainly different from what we find in our period. First, the idea of the crown land (*khālīṣa*), as distinguished from the land possessed by private individuals was hardly popular in pre-Muslim times. Truly, the villages and fields allotted by the Paramāra and Cāhamāna princes out of their personal estates (*svabhoga*) may be treated as some kind of crownland in their principalities and as different from land under the general control of the state or land under the occupation of free peasants. But the grants of their contemporary princes as well as those of the Pālas, Pratihāras and Rāṣtrakūṭas do not give evidence of any

1 *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, i, no. 6, p. 90, Plate A, ll. 8-9.

2 Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, p. 116.

3 *Ibid.*

separate crownland ; on the other hand they show that the kings were free to grant land in any part of their kingdom.

✓ Second, the *jāgīrs* or *madad-i maāsh* granted by the Mughal emperors did not carry such strong rights in land as did the religious and some secular grants made by early Hindu kings. Mughal assignees and grantees were given only usufructuary rights and not rights of ownership of land conferred on their counterparts in the days of the Hindu rule, because the central authority was far more effective and stronger in the Mughal period than in pre-Muslim days.

Finally, on account of the development of money economy and rural trade, peasant or individual rights in land tended to be stronger under Muslim rule. Although from the Gupta period the law-books allowed the right of sale, purchase and mortgage, these could take effect only with the revival of the use of coins from the 11th-12th centuries. Conditions for the exercise of individual rights became more congenial in the following five centuries, when the peasants paid their rents or revenues mainly in cash and not in kind and services as they did earlier.

✓ (On the whole, the peculiarities of the system of land rights in early mediaeval times indicate a strong decentralised feudalism,) which was weakened under the impact of money economy and central control under the Mughals.

CHAPTER V

THE HEYDAY OF POLITICAL FEUDALISM

(c. A.D. 1000-1200)

Neither on the fall of the Maurya empire nor on that of the Gupta empire did Northern India face such complete political disintegration as it did on the disappearance of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire in the second half of the 10th century. The fragmentation of political power was never so complete and thorough as on the eve of the Turkish conquest. At the time of the Kaivartta rebellion in about 1075 the whole of Bengal and Bihar was split up into about ten principalities, which owed only a nominal allegiance to the Pāla overlord. The Pālas were succeeded by the Senas, whose paramountcy was challenged by the Karṇāṭas of Mithilā (and perhaps by the dynasty of Īśvaraghoṣa in south-east Bengal). Probably the feudal dynasts of the time of the Kaivartta rebellion continued to worry the Senas. In Bihar two new princes, the Senas of Piṭhī and the Guptas of Jayanagar in South Monghyr, came to the forefront during this period, when also ruled at Japla the dynasty of the Khayarvālas, who were the feudatories of the Gāhaḍavālas.

The Gāhaḍavālas, of course, ruled over a major part of the modern Uttar Pradesh, but had to share power with the Kalacuris in Gorakhpur. The eastern part of Central India was divided between two main dynasties, the Kalacuris of the Dāhala region with their capital at Tripurī and the Candellas of Jejākabhukti. The Kalacuris broke up into three branches, of Tripurī in the west, of Ratnapura in the east and of Gorakhpur in the north.

(The division of Rājasthān, Gujarāt and Mālwa into several units seems to have been even more thorough. The Cāhamānas were divided into five branches, ruling from Broach, Jāvālipura (founded in the mid-12th century), Śākambhari, Naḍḍula and Ranthambor. Of these the Cāhamāna families of Broach and Ranthambor leapt into prominence in the beginning of the 13th century, but may have existed in the 12th century as well. The Guhilas, practically independent in the second half of the 12th century when they ousted the founder of the Jāvālipura branch of the Cāhamānas, declared their independence some time between 1207 and 1227, as a result of which Mewar and Āghāṭa were temporarily lost to the Caulukyas¹. They held the area round Mewar, which became independent in the first decade of the 13th century. The Tomaras held Ajmer and Delhi, and the Kacchapaghāṭa dynasts also ruled over some portions of Rājasthān.

(Similarly, the Paramāras, who ruled over Mālwa and the adjoining areas, proliferated into the different branches of Mālwa, Abu, Bhinmal and Kiradu, all ruling in the twelfth century.) Abu became independent in the time of Bhīma Caulukya, who restored his authority over the Abu Paramāras by 1062. After this Abu remained a part of the Caulukya kingdom till the end of the 13th century, though the Paramāras were allowed to rule there as vassals². But Bhinmal became independent in the time of Bhīma³. Kiradu came into prominence under the Paramāra Someśvara who strengthened his kingdom secure through the favour of Kumārapāla. In about 1156 he helped his sovereign by defeating a chief called Jajaka from whom he captured 1700 horses⁴. (The Caulukya rule, however, brought political unity to

1 A. K. Majumdar, *Caulukyas of Gujarat*, p. 156.

2 Ibid., pp. 49-50.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 111,

Gujarāt, which had been divided into north and south. But towards the end of the 12th century their feudatories, the Vaghelas, set up their own independent rule in Gujarāt.)

We do not have adequate information about the Panjab and the Himalayan states. The dynasty of the Shāhi princes, who ruled over the Panjab and Ohind, was extinguished in 1021 by Mahmud of Ghazni. The Himalayan state of Chamba was under its own independent rulers.

Thus (on the break-up of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire the political picture of north-western India resembled that of Western Europe on the collapse of the Carolingian empire; only in India we have more numerous independent dynasts whose sovereign powers are proved by the issue of coins and by the execution of land grants without any reference to their overlord.)

(The numerous principalities continued to fight amongst themselves, and the period from A. D 1000 to 1300 has been rightly characterised as "the struggle for empire.") Apart from fighting the Kaivarttas, the Pālas measured swords with the Kalacuris and Gāhaḍavālas for the possession of the western parts of Bihar. The Kalacuris fought the kings of Orissa, the Candellas and the Gāhaḍavālas. The Gāhaḍavālas fought the Candellas, and the Cāhamānas, whose king Pṛthvīrāja sacked Mahoba, an important seat of Candella power. Similarly the Paramāras inflicted a severe defeat on Paramardin, the Candella king. In fact the twelfth century witnessed a tripartite struggle between the Candellas, the Gāhaḍavālas, and the Cāhamānas for supremacy over Northern India. Perpetual fighting went on among the Paramāras, Caulukyas and Cāhamānas. Now and then the Paramāras also waged wars against the Hūnas, who held some pockets in Mālwa and Rājasthān. To add to this the Coḷas, and particularly the Cālukyas, led occasional raids into Northern India. The Senas, who established

their kingdoms in Bengal, and the Karṇāṭas, who established their kingdom in Tīrhut, came in the train of the Cālukyas, and once established in power fought between themselves. And then the Brāhmaṇa Shāhis of the Panjab and the Caulukyas of Gujarāt waged a bitter war against Mahmud of Ghazni, and the Caulukyas, Cāhamānas and Gāhaḍavālas fought Muhammad of Ghur.

✓The administrative and economic consequences of these frequent wars amongst principalities, mostly similar in size to the modern administrative divisions of a state, can be better visualised if we bear in mind that each principality worth the name would maintain its army, its police system, its court, its revenue machinery, its judiciary, its feudatories, and its priests and temples. It is obvious that all this heavily bore on the peasantry, who would naturally have no interest in the preservation of such states.

How did these principalities arise? (Some of them were obviously the results of the partition of patrimony among the princes of the ruling family. But others resulted from the widespread practice of granting big and small territories to vassals and officials who entrenched themselves territorially and ended up as independent potentates.) ✓The Gupta and post-Gupta epigraphs provide very little evidence on this point. We have, however, some indications of this in the following period 750-1000. But we get quite a bit of evidence for the period 1000-1200. Epigraphic evidence of such grants can be traced back to the 9th century, and they become considerable in number only from the beginning of the 11th century. The earlier grants to vassals and officials were either oral or written on perishable material, such as the bark of the birch tree or cloth. The former material was used in Gujarāt during the 12th and 13th centuries for making grants to vassals of various kinds¹, and it

¹ LP, p. 7.

may have been used in earlier times. The law-books of the Gupta period provide for documents of gifts of land to be written either on copper-plates or on pieces of cloth¹. Since grants to officials and feudatories were not always intended to secure spiritual merit or to last for ever, they were recorded on pieces of cloth. By the end of the 10th century officials and feudatories grew so powerful that, in order to secure grants on a permanent basis, they probably preferred to have them on some durable material.

(Service grants of land are found mostly in Orissa and in about half a dozen feudatory kingdoms, which arose on the ruins of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire. But it is significant that we have very few such grants even in the last days of the Pāla rule in Bengal and Bihar. Indirect evidence for the grant of land to a high dignitary is found under Vighrahapāla III (1055-70). A brāhmaṇa officer Ghaṇṭūśa, described as a servant (*vidheya*) of the king, granted land, with the permission of Vighrahapāla, out of his own possession (*hala*)², which may have been granted to him by the Pāla ruler as a service tenure. The only other piece of epigraphic evidence which can be interpreted in this light is the copper-plate grant of Vaidyadeva from Kāmarūpa, whose family had provided hereditary ministers to three generations of Pāla kings, Vighrahapāla, Rāmapāla, and Kumārapāla, thus covering the period from 1055 to 1125. Vaidyadeva, who served under Kumārapāla, had become practically independent towards the last days of the Pāla empire, and granted two villages in Prāgjyotiṣa-bhukti, without the formal endorsement of his suzerain³. These two villages were formerly enjoyed by (*bhuktaka*) Gangādhara Bhaṭṭa⁴, who evidently had received them

1 *Yāj.*, I. 318-20 and *Bṛhaspati* quoted in *Vyavahāramayūkha*, pp. 25-27.

2 *EI*, xxix, no. 8, ll. 49-51.

3 *EI*, ii, no. 28, plate II. B. 1. 15.

4 *Ibid.*

earlier either from the Pāla king or from his Kāmarūpa minister. Apparently the ministerial family had increased its landed property as a result of successive grants from the Pāla kings, and had ultimately slipped out of their control. In spite of all this, the fact remains that except some land grants to Kaivarttas we have no direct evidence of land assignments to officials and feudatories under the Pālas. This may be attributed to the existence of fewer categories of vassals and to the stability of the central power, evident from the continuity of the same dynasty for well over four centuries. Further, of all mediaeval rulers the Pālas maintained the largest complement of officers, which did not easily allow a few officers to assume so much power as to demand copper-plate charters for land grants.

The position seems to have been different under the Varmans, the feudatories of the Pālas in South-East Bengal. Bhavadeva, whose grandfather had served as minister under a king of Vaṅga¹ and who himself was a minister of Harivarmadeva² (c. 1200), claims to have increased his land and learning by military and intellectual feats respectively³. Obviously this could not have been possible unless his master granted him land as a reward for his military achievements. We also learn that his ancestor Bhavadeva had been granted a village by the king of Gauḍa⁴. We have no service grants belonging to the Sena dynasty. We do not have any proof of direct vassals of the Sena rulers, but a religious grant of Viśvarūpasena, ascribable to the beginning of the 13th century A. D., may be interpreted in this light. We learn that in Puṇḍravardhanabhukti a brāhmaṇa called Halāyudha purchased from two persons

1 Ibid., iii, no, 4, verse 9.

2 Ibid., verse 16.

3 Ibid., verse 12.

4 Ibid., verses 6-7.

some land¹, which, as defined in the title-deed, was then made over to him by Kumāra Sūryasena on his birth-day². This furnishes an example of land sale for secular purposes. Whether the gift meant the refund of the price of land to the donee cannot be definitely said. But perhaps this sale transaction and subsequent donation were carried out within the territorial jurisdiction of the prince. By another provision two other plots of land purchased by Halāyudha and enjoyed by Kumāra Puruṣottamasena were later given by that prince in the 14th regnal year of Viśvarūpasena³. Apparently the two Sena princes had been assigned some land, in which their rights were limited by two factors. First, their tenants could freely carry on land transactions without the consent of the assignee. Secondly, the religious grants made by the assignees had to be declared in a general charter issued by the king, who was the head of the royal family. Similar rights were also enjoyed by the minister of peace and war Nāṇisimha, in the land probably assigned to him ; for he made over to the same Halāyudha two plots of land, one arable and the other homestead, which had been purchased by the donee from two persons⁴. Thus the present grant suggests that (the Sena kings granted land to members of the royal family and officials. In mediaeval Assamese grants various kinds of feudatories swamp the officials, but we do not have any epigraphic evidence of land grants made to either.)

(Orissa, which in mediaeval times was split up into numerous petty states, favoured by its physical features, has more service grants than Assam, Bengal and Bihar taken together.✓ In this region ministers, astrologers, *rāṇakas* (higher vassals) and *sāmantas* (military vassals)

1 *IB*, iii, no. 16, ll. 53-4.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 56-8.

4 *Ibid.*, ll. 54-6.

were granted land on auspicious occasions, apparently for services rendered to their overlords.) The Somavamśī ruler Mahābhavagupta II (1000-15) granted a village to *rāṇaka* Rāccho, the grandson of a bhaṭṭa brāhmaṇa, who had emigrated from Śrāvastī *maṇḍala*¹. That the *rāṇaka* occupied a high place in the feudal hierarchy of this ruler is evident from his inclusion in the list *rājñī-rāṇaka-rājaputra-rājavallabh-ādīn*, addressed in this charter². This grant carried with it all the usual rights which are found in the grants of this period made to brāhmaṇas. Although it was made on spiritual grounds, on the occasion of a solar eclipse, the title *rāṇaka* attached to the name of the beneficiary suggests that the donation may have something to do with his administrative and military services as a vassal. Incidentally the grant shows that this title, originally applied only to the members of the ruling family, now came to be extended to brāhmaṇa vassals.

A copper-plate of the Bhañja ruler Yaśabhañjadeva of Khiñjali (in the former Bauḍ state) refers to his allotment of a village with all the usual rights to an astrologer (*jyotiṣī*) Jagadhara Śarmā³, who was also granted another village by Jayabhañja, the younger brother of Yaśabhañja, both charters dating in the latter half of the 12th century⁴. The astrologers appear high in the list of vassals and officials addressed by the king in the land grants of the Gāhaḍavālas and Senas. Very probably they also occupied an important official position in the Bhañja kingdom of Khiñjali, where religious grants to them really represent assignments for their services in making calendars and determining auspicious occasions for important government undertakings. Under the Bhañjas of Khijīṅga we find two

1 *El*, iii, no. 47, plate F, ll. 28-42

2 *Ibid.*, ll. 33-34.

3 *El*, xviii, no. 29, ll. 19-29.

4 *El*, xix, 43 and fn. 1,

rulers in succession allotting villages to a military vassal called *mahāsāmanta* Vaṭṭa. First, Raṇabhaṇja granted him four villages with their four boundaries, not to be entered by *cāṭas* and *bhāṭas*, with rights to mines, as a reward for his conduct as a royal servant (*vidheyī dṛṣtvā*)¹. Here he is described as *mahāsāmanta muṇḍisutaḥ* Vaṭṭa, which may give the impression that he was the son of the *mahāsāmanta* Muṇḍi. But the second grant, made to him by Raṇabhaṇja's successor Rājabhaṇja, discloses that he was *mahāsāmanta* Vaṭṭa, son of *sāmanta* Muṇḍi². Here also he was enfeoffed for his satisfactory service, and curiously enough in this case the fief was a Brāhmaṇavasati, a village numerically dominated by brāhmaṇas³. Of course this grant was made free of taxes and all administrative encumbrances imposed by the king⁴. Privileges allowed in the first grant imply that it was tax-free, but this is not explicitly stated therein. We have no further epigraphic evidence of land grants to *sāmantas* and *mahāsāmantas*, but the *sāmantas*, who form an important landowning element in Orissa, very probably owed their origin to such grants.

Under the Greater Gaṅgas, who ruled over both Oriya and Telegu speaking areas, who find quite a few epigraphic grants made to officers. Under the Gaṅga king Vajrahasta (1038-70) a high officer Dāraparāja, who was the regent of five districts (*pañca-viṣaya*)⁵, granted a tax-free village to the *rājaputra* bridegroom on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter⁶. Obviously the donor could not make such a grant unless he himself had received a large slice of territory from his Gaṅga overlord. He was not entitled to this on the ground of

1 *JASB*, xl, no. 3, p. 166.

2 *Ibid*, p. 168.

3 *Ibid*.

4 *akaratvena ca sarvavādhā vivarjītena*... *Ibid.*, p. 168.

5 *EI*, xxix, no. 26, ll. 26-33.

6 *EI*, iii, no. 31, ll. 9-15.

kingship, for he was a son of Coḷa-Kāmadirāja¹ and thus not related to the ruling house. Direct proof of a grant to a high officer is found in the reign of Anantavarman Coḷagaṅga (1076-1138), who assigned to his trusty agent (*āptakriyāya*) Coḷagaṅga a village with a hamlet in Kaliṅga, for the spriritual merit and fame of him and his parents². But this usual phrase was probably a euphemism for services rendered to the state.

(The typical service grants of the Gaṅga rulers seem to have been made to military functionaries known as *nāyakas*. Thus under Vajrahasta III (1049) a village in Andhra Pradesh was granted to a person called Gaṇapati Nāyaka³) who, because of the absence of his *gotra* and *pravara* and also on the analogy of the following charter, seems to have been a vaiśya of some importance. The second charter was issued in the year 526 of the Gaṅga era under Madhukāmārṇava, son of Anantavarman⁴. According to it three villages were together formed into a *vaiśya-agrahāra* and granted to a certain Erapa Nāyaka, the son of Mañci Nāyaka of the vaiśya caste⁵.

Unfortunately further details about these charters cannot be obtained from their brief notices in *Madras Epigraphic Reports*, but the term *agrahāra*, for want of a better word, here evidently stood for a tax-free village. It could not have possibly meant a grant to a *nāyaka* (military leader) for running an educational foundation, a sense in which the term was used ordinarily in earlier grants. In all likelihood this considerable grant was made to the *nāyaka* for maintaining a fixed number of soldiers for the service of the state. Some evidence of a grant to a *nāyaka* is also found in an inscription of Anantavarman Coḷagaṅga, who made a

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 174, ll. 30-34.

3 *Madras Report on Epigraphy*, 1918-19. Appendix A, no. 3.

4 Ibid., no. 5.

5 Ibid.

perpetual grant of a tax-free village to his dependant Mādhava¹. The term *pād-opajivin* (subsisting on the feet) applied to the assignee does not indicate his exact official position. But the title *nāyaka* attached to the name of his grandfather Vāsudeva² suggests that his family rendered some kind of military service to the Gaṅgas. He was either a feudal vassal or an officer, for both these classes of functionaries are covered by the term *pād-opajivin* in the Pāla land grants.

(By the thirteenth century the system of Gaṅga administration became completely feudal, for in 1295 we find Nṛsiṃhadeva II, the builder of the Sun Temple at Konārak, granting two villages to the *kumāra mahāpātra* Bhimadeva Śarman³, who, as can be inferred from his title *mahāpātra*, was a minister under this king.) As a part of this grant, which was made on the occasion of a lunar eclipse, the donee also received one *śreṣṭhi* (merchant), one *tāmbūli* (betel-seller), one *tāmra-kāra* (copper-smith) and one *kaṃsakāra* (brazier), all from different villages⁴. Apparently the purpose was to make their services available to the self-sufficient estate of the *mahāpātra*, who may have granted them some land for their maintenance. For by the same grant Nṛsiṃhadeva II allots half a *vāṭikā* of a land to a *tāmra-kāra* (copper-smith) named Nāḍi⁵. The instances quoted above are not many, but unless we have evidence to the contrary it would be fair to conclude that the important mediaeval dynasties of Orissa, the Bhaṇjas, Somavaṃśis and Greater Gaṅgas, paid their vassals and officials by land grants.

(In the neighbouring kingdom of Bundelkhand ruled by the Candellas we find that land grants were occasionally made to civil and frequently to military officials.

1 *IA*, xviii, 171-72, ll. 109-13.

2 *Ibid.*, I, 109.

3 *JASB*, lxx, pt. I, pp. 254-6, ll. 121.

4 *Ibid.*, ll. 19-21,

5 *Ibid.*, ll. 18-19.

The earliest grant can be traced back to Dhaṅga (954-1002), who granted a village with all the usual rights to the brāhmaṇa Bhaṭṭa Yaśodhara¹. Although this grant was made on religious grounds, we learn from another record that the donee held the office of the chief priest and judge. But (under the Candellas the kāyasthas played an important part in administration). An inscription of Kīrttivarman (1073-90) refers to the royal grant of the prosperous village of Dargaṇḍa to a Vāstavya kāyastha dignitary Jājūka², who, as we learn from the Ajayagaḍh rock inscription of Bhojavarman, was appointed by Gaṇḍa, the successor of Dhaṅga, as a *ṭhakkura* looking after all the departments of government³. His descendant Maheśvara was granted the village of Pipalāhikā and vested with authority over the gates of Kālāñjara by Kīrttivarman in recognition of, and as a reward for, the services that the former rendered to him when he fell in distress in Pītādri⁴, apparently in some battle. The inscription of Bhojavarman, referred to above, mentions both these grants. It also speaks of a third grant⁵ under Trailokyavarman, who appointed Vāseka, a member of this kāyastha family, as *viśiṣa* of the fort of Jayapura (the present Ajayagaḍh), and endowed him with a village⁶. The village was obviously made over to him for his military services, for he not only defeated a rebel called Bhojaka and conquered part of his territory, but also pacified the Candella kingdom and made it secure against foreign enemies⁷. Members of this kāyastha family held important offices for nearly 280 years under

1 *IA*, xvi, 204, ll. 6-11.

2 *Ibid.*, xxx, no. 17, verse 6.

3 *ṭhakkura dharmayuktaḥ sarvādhikaraṇeṣu sadā niyuktaḥ*. *Ibid.*, i, no. 38, II, verse 6.

4 *EI*, xxx, no. 17, verse 8.

5 None of the copper-plates has come to light.

6 *Ibid.*, versess 16-17.

7 *Ibid.*, verses 6-20.

the Candella kings from Gaṇḍa to Bhojavarman¹. But they generally appear as warriors, since of the three grants made to this family two were made for military services.)

The military aspect comes out prominently in some Candella grants, made to brāhmaṇas and others. Thus in 1187 Paramardin granted a *pada* of land to the brāhmaṇa *senāpati* Ajayapāla, the son of *senāpati* Kelhaṇa². Again he granted one *pada* each to one of his sons, *rāuta* Somarāja³, and to two other sons Mahārāja and Vatsarāja⁴, who had not attained the position of *rāuta*. Portions of land granted to the *senāpati* and his *rāuta* son were not enough for their maintenance. But in another case Paramardin granted in 1171 a whole village to the brāhmaṇa *senāpati* Madanapāla Śarmā, whose father, grandfather and great grandfather had held the title of *thakkura*⁵, a feudal title commonly applied to brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and kāyastha functionaries of mediaeval times in Northern India. The village was granted to the commander-in-chief free from past, present and future dues⁶, a characteristic of all Candella grants. But in the above two grants to brāhmaṇa military functionaries the ground given is not military service but spiritual benefit. Death in the battlefield is clearly stated to be the cause of a grant by Trailokyavarman in 1204, when he granted a village to the heirs of *rāuta* Sāmanta as *mṛtyuka-vṛtau* (i. e. for the maintenance of the family of the dead), as this *rāuta*, whose father and grandfather had also held this title, was killed in a fight with the Turuṣkas⁷. The same king made another

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., verses 19-20.

3 *EI*, iv, no. 20, l. 19.

4 Ibid., ll. 66-67.

5 *IA*, xxv, 205 ff., ll. 16-19.

6 Ibid., l. II.

7 *EI*, vvi, no. 20, l. ll. 7-11.

grant to the family of the same *rāuta* in 1205¹. The *gotra* of the grantee is mentioned² but not his caste; perhaps he was a *kṣatriya*. An important military dignitary was *nāyaka* Kulaśarmā—son of a *nāyaka*, grandson of a *rāuta*, and great grandson of a *rāṇaka*—who was granted by Trailokyavarman in 1208 a village with the usual concessions and terms mentioned in the Candella grants³. Although the grantee was a *brāhmaṇa*, we have no reference either to spiritual merit or to some pious occasion which caused this charity. It was therefore a non-sectarian copper-plate charter of land given to a hereditary *brāhmaṇa* military official. Viravarman, the son and successor of Trailokyavarman, granted in 1254 a village to a *rāuta*,—whose father, grandfather and great grandfather had held this position in succession,—for an act of valour in battle⁴. But the purpose recorded was the increase of the religious merit of the donor and parents⁵, although the mention of the *gotra* of the grantee⁶ does not necessarily show that he was a *brāhmaṇa*. Lastly, we may refer to a second grant of Viravarman made in 1288 to a very important military *brāhmaṇa* official called Balabhadra Mallaya, an illustrious chief of distinguished bravery, who had conquered the *rājās* of six places, the Turks and rulers from Kashmir⁷. Of course the purpose specified in the grant was the spiritual benefit of the donor and his parents⁸, but there is no doubt that the beneficiary was a non-*brāhmaṇa* and that the village was granted in recognition of his great military achievements.

1 Ibid., II, ll. 7-12.

2 Ibid., I, l. 10.

3 *EI*, xxxi, no. II, ll. 12-18.

4 *EI*, xx, no. 14c, ll. 3-14.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 A. Cunningham, *ASR*, xxi, 75.

8 Ibid.

The number of Candella service grants is not negligible, and they make it clear that chief priests, judges, governors of forts, *senāpatis*, *nāyakas* and *rāutas* of the Candellas were granted land for their services. Whether the *rāutas* were required to serve their king with a fixed number of horse or soldiers cannot be said on the basis of the existing evidence. But most Candella service tenures seem to be of a military nature. This indicates the preponderance of the military element, which can also be inferred from the mention of as many as 21 *skandhāvāras* (military and administrative camps) in the Candella territory.

Under Trailokyavarman in 1212 we find the grant of a village in the form of mortgage (*vitta-bandha*) made by a Śaivite teacher Śāntaśiva, son of the royal preceptor (*rājaguru*), to a *rāṇaka* in consideration of perhaps a huge amount of money which is not mentioned¹. Unless the *rāṇaka* carried on trade, which seems unlikely, he could have no other source of income than the revenue derived presumably from the land granted to him by the Candella kings. The *rāṇaka* was a chief of considerable importance, since he was served by a *thakkura*, who was authorised to take possession of the village on his behalf². This Candella mortgage land grant can be compared to a similar deed recorded on a special size brick in Jaunpur in 1227. Here we find a *rāṇaka* mortgaging his fields to two other *rāṇakas* in consideration of a loan of 2250 drammas³. Perhaps they had received their land from the Gāhaḍavālas, who ruled over Jaunpur. Remarkably enough, in the above two instances the *rāṇakas* are found engaged in money-lending and thus increasing their landed property. In such a case the mortgagee enjoyed limited rights, confined to the

1 *El*, xxv, no. 1, ll. 10-14.

2 *Ibid.*, ll. 20-21 ; p. 3.

3 *JASB*, xix (1850), 454-56 ; *dhanika* is the term used for the creditor.

collection of taxes¹ or enjoyment of the produce of the fields so long as the debts were not cleared off. But if the debtor failed to pay off his dues the mortgaged land would certainly pass under the control of the mortgagee. These two cases, especially the one under the Candellas, show clear regranting by local rulers of the land which presumably had been previously granted to them by their overlords. Such mortgage of land in later mediaeval France and Germany (i. e. from the 12th century onwards) was treated as a fief, the debtor being the lord and the creditor the vassal². Similar relations, however, did not exist between the debtor and creditor in mediaeval India.

In U. P. the oldest inscriptional evidence for a land grant to an official is found in Gorakhpur about the beginning of the 10th century. A religious benefaction made by the minister (*saciva*) Madoli, son of the *sāmanta* and *mantri* Kṛtakīrtti, states that the village he granted to Durgā had been obtained by him through the favour of king Jayāditya³, who may have been a feudatory of the Gurjara-Pratihāras. But we have no service grants by the Pratihāras until we come to Yaśahpāla, perhaps the last ruler of the line. In 1036 this king, while camping at Kara near Allahabad, presented a village in the *maṇḍala* of Kausāmbī as a gift to Māthura Vikāṭa of Pabhosa⁴. This was certainly a non-religious grant made to a non-brāhmaṇa. Probably the grantee was a kāyastha, whose ancestors hailed from Mathurā. It seems that Māthura kāyasthas served under various dynasties. Thus the minister of the Cāhamāna ruler Hammira belonged to the Kaṭāriyā kāyastha family of Mathurā, whose genealogy is given in an inscription

1 *El*, xxv, no. I. l. 19.

2 Ganshof, *Feudalism*, p. 110.

3 *grāma rāja-prasāda-samprōptaḥ*. *IA*, xxi, 170-71 ll, 7-12.

4 *JRAS*, 1927, p. 694.

of 1288¹. The Gāhaḍavālas, the successors of the Pratīhāras in the greater part of U. P., are not so far known for any grant to a kāyastha officer, but they made grants to their other vassals and officials on a considerable scale.

In contrast to the Candellas ~~(the~~ Gāhaḍavālas generally granted villages to civil officials, mainly brāhmaṇas, among whom their chief priest Jāguka or Jāgu Śarmā and his son Prahlāda Śarmā received the lion's share. A survey of 10 Gāhaḍavāla grants made to this *purohita*, who invariably occupied the highest position among the official dignitaries mentioned in the land grants and held office successively under two rulers, Madanapāla and Govindacandra, shows that he was granted ten villages situated in about ten different *pattalās* (fiscal units) of the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom². The *purohita* received a village almost annually between 1114 and 1127. But he then fell into disfavour for about 10 years. He was again restored to favour in 1139 when he received a land grant³. (The reason for these grants is stated to be spiritual⁴, but this occurs as a matter of form; in reality the grants seems to be annual payments for services rendered to the Gāhaḍavāla rulers.) Since the villages granted to him were scattered in ten different fiscal units, Jāgu Śarmā could not easily consolidate his power and position. But there is no doubt that his general influence spread over a considerable part of the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom. The power and prestige of the family was further extended by eight grants in favour of Jāgu Śarmā's son, Prahlāda or Praharāja Śarmā, who was given a feudatory or military rank of *rāuta* and stepped into the shoes of his father

1 *EI*, xiv, no. 6, ll. 9-26.

2 Roma Niyogi, *History of the Gāhaḍavāla Dynasty*, Appendix B, nos. 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, 26 and 37.

3 *EI*, ii, no. 29, ll. 11, 19-20.

4. *Ibid.*, no. 11, A, ll. 20-21, B, ll. 19-20, C, l. 19 etc.

as a *mahāpurohita*¹. Thus this brāhmaṇa family enjoyed landed property in eighteen *pattalās*, their total number in the whole kingdom being sixty.² The grants carried the same rights and privileges as those made to brāhmaṇas, and, between father and son, Jāgu Śarmā and Prahlāda Śarmā were entitled to almost all the Gāhaḍavāla taxes and imposts specified and unspecified.³

(The Gāhaḍavālas also granted villages to some other brāhmaṇa dignitaries, who served as hereditary *rāutas* under them.) Thus in 1133 Govindacandra conferred a village on the brāhmaṇa *rāuta* Jaṭeśa Śarmā, whose father was a *rāuta* and grandfather a *ṭhakkura*⁴. Again in 1168 Jayaccandra, as *yuvarāja*, granted a village to two hereditary brāhmaṇa *rāutas*, whose father was a *rāuta* and grandfather a *ṭhakkura*. The village was granted on spiritual grounds with all rights in perpetuity⁵. In 1186 on similar grounds Jayaccandra granted a village to the *rāuta* Anaṅga, whose father and grandfather had been *rāutas*. We are not sure whether he was a brāhmaṇa although his *gotra* and *pravaras* are mentioned⁶. We have only one clear instance of land grants to a kṣatriya *rāuta*. (In 1177, as king, Jayaccandra bestowed a village on a kṣatriya *rāuta* Rājyadharavarman) who was the son of the *mahāmahattaka ṭhakkura* śrī Vidyādhara and grandson of the *mahāmahattaka ṭhakkura* śrī Jagad-dhara⁷. Curiously enough both the *gotra* and *pravaras* of this donee are mentioned⁸, and had he not been described as a kṣatriya⁹ he could easily have been

1 Niyogī; op. cit., App. B, numbers 50, 52-56, 58.

2 Ibid., 138.

3 ...*samasta-niyat-āniyat-ādāyan*. *El*, iv, no. II. 0. 11.

4 Ibid., J. 11. 19-21.

5 *IA*, xv, 7-8, ll. 16-22. His grandfather's brother also was a *ṭhakkura*. It appears that the rank of a *rāuta* was higher than that of a *ṭhakkura*.

6 *IA*, xv, II-12, ll. 20-29.

7 *IA*, xviii, pp. 134 ff., ll. 20-24, 27-35.

8 Ibid., ll. 27-28.

9 Ibid., 1, 28.

mistaken for a brāhmaṇa, for the grant is accompanied by religious formalities and intended to last as long as the sun and the moon¹. Rājyadharavarman was evidently a very powerful functionary, as he was assigned five other grants besides this². Leaving aside the names of villages and *pāṭakas* (hamlets, i. e. *maujas* or *paṭṭis*) assigned to this officer, all the six grants (1177-80) in his favour are similarly worded. They nowhere impose on him any obligation to serve the donor; on the contrary the object of all these grants is to secure spiritual merit to the donor and his parents. But they could not possibly have been made out of purely altruistic and charitable motives, and certainly not out of religious considerations, for the donee was a kṣatriya. Whether he forced the king to make these grants is not clear. But since three grants were made to him in 1177 and another three in 1180, this suggests that he had become exceptionally powerful during these two years. But in spite of half a dozen fiefs Rājyadharavarman was not as influential as Jāgu Śarmā and his son, who had eighteen grants to their credit.

(Under the Gāhaḍavālas *rāṇakas* also seem to have received some land grants.) We hear of a land gift made by the *rāṇaka* Lavarāpravāha in 1109 with the permission of the *yuvarāja* Govindacandra, apparently acting on behalf of his father Madanapāla³. Obviously the *rāṇaka* made this grant out of the village granted to him. (Towards the end of the Gāhaḍavāla rule some *rāṇakas* set up independent principalities. Thus in 1197 we find a *rāuta* mentioning not only the lord of Kāñyakubja but also the *rājya* (kingdom) of his immediate *rāṇaka* lord⁴.) We also find a Gāhaḍavāla feudatory Siṅgara Vatsarāja making a grant in Rāpaḍi *viṣaya* in 1134 on

1 Ibid., ll. 26-27.

2 *IA*, xviii, 134 ff. Plates G, H, I, J and K.

3 *IA*, xviii, pp. 18-19, ll. 10-28.

4 *JASB*, N. S. vii, 763, ll. 1-9.

the same terms as his Gāhaḍavāla overlord¹, although he may have been reinstated in his dominions rather than endowed with any land grants by his suzerain.

(Since military service and acts of bravery do not appear in the Gāhaḍavāla copper-plates as reasons for grants of villages to *rāutas*, as we find in the Candella grants, we may think that grants were made for general services of all varieties.) *Rāṇakas* and *rāutas*, however, are not mentioned in the list of officials so often repeated in the Gāhaḍavāla grants. This would suggest that they were vassals, distinct from regular officials under the direct control of the state. The number of *rāutas* was far greater under the Gāhaḍavālas than under the Candellas.

(There is some evidence to show that, apart from the *purohita*, even some regular officials were granted villages. This can be inferred from the use of the term *vikara-grāmāḥ* (tax-free villages) in the Gāhaḍavāla copper-plates of 1092-93, according to which a whole *pattalā* (fiscal unit) was granted by Candradeva to 500 brāhmaṇas².) The district was granted with the exception of villages belonging to temples and brāhmaṇas and of tax-free villages³. The charter names 25 villages as belonging to temples, 2 villages as belonging to brāhmaṇas and 6 villages as tax-free (*vikara-grāmāḥ*)⁴. There does not seem to be any sense in taking these villages as belonging to handless people, as has been done by D. R. Sahni⁵. The term *vikara* can only mean tax-free⁶, and it appears that these villages were granted

1 *El*, iv, no. 12.

2 *El*, xiv, no. 15, ll. 23-30.

3 *Ibid*.

4 *Ibid*, ll. 27-30.

5 *Ibid*, 196.

6 *Ibid*, 196, fn. I. *Vikara* also appears as a form of fight. If we adopt this meaning villages may have been made tax-free in return for the soldiers they supplied to the king. In the *Lekhapaddhati* the term *vikarapada* is used in the sense of miscellaneous expenses. (pp. 99, 101).

to officials. Such tax-free villages may well have existed in the other *pattalās* of the kingdom also, but they are not noticed because in no other case is a whole *pattalā* granted.

A fiscal unit of 84 villages is mentioned in a Gāhaḍvāla inscription, but we have several units of this kind under the Cāhamānas and Pāramāras. Such units probably imply the virtual partition of the paternal dominion among the members of the ruling clan. In fact the Gāhaḍvāla records do not provide us any evidence of any grant to kinsmen and relations, although *rājās*, *rājñīs* (queens) and *yuvarājas* (crown princes) occupy the highest place in the official list of the dignitaries and officers who are notified of the land grants¹. But several Cāhamāna inscriptions testify to the apportionment of land among the kinsmen of the ruling chief. The earliest record of this type is a stone inscription of 973, found in the former state of Jaipur and belonging to the Śākambharī, the main line of the Cāhamānas². According to it the king Siṃharāja, his two brothers Vatsarāja and Vighraharāja, his two sons Caṇḍarāja and Govindarāja, and perhaps his distant kinsman Jayanarāja, each gave to a Śiva temple villages and hamlets out of their respective personal possessions (*svabhoga*)³. Each one had been evidently allowed a personal estate, varying according to his status, for his personal support and services rendered to the king. The present inscription shows that not only the king but even the junior members of the ruling clan could dispose of their personal land freely.

We have slightly different evidence of this type in the twelfth century. An inscription of 1143 informs us that a Cāhamāna queen Śrī-Tihunaka enjoyed a

1 *EI*, iv, no. II, A, ll. 15-16.

2 *EI*, ii, no. 8.

3 *Ibid*, verses 48-49,

village as *girās* (for food and clothing)¹. Here the queen did not belong to the kin of the family in which she was married, but she was given a personal estate commensurate to her status. A very clear grant to a royal scion is found in the Nadol plates of 1161, according to which twelve villages with absolute rights were assigned jointly by the *rājakula* Alhaṇadeva and the *kumāra* Kelhaṇadeva to the *rājaputra* Kīrttipāla². This fief was assigned to Kīrttipāla in perpetuity, for when he makes over a yearly sum of two drammas from each of the twelve villages to a Jain temple he asks his descendants to observe the terms of his grant³. We find a unit of twelve villages in a Cāhamāna inscription of the 10th century⁴, but are not sure whether this was granted as a personal estate. (The practice of granting land to the members of the ruling clan continued under the successors of Kīrttipāla) (According to a grant of 1176 his two sons the *rājaputra* Lakhaṇapālha and the *rājaputra* Abhayapāla were the proprietors (*bhoktr*) of Sināṇava⁵. They also enjoyed a village conjointly with the queen,) for all the three together contributed their share in barley realised from the *araghaṭa* (machine-well) of that village⁶. This was done during the reign of the *mahārājādhirāja* Kelhaṇa⁷, who had obviously succeeded to the throne of Alhaṇa, the father of the *rājaputra* Kīrttipāla.

The grants made to queens and *rājaputras* were entirely secular. Evidently the queen was not expected to perform any administrative functions unless she acted as regent or in a similar capacity. But this cannot

1 *El*, xi, no. 4, V, l. 2.

2 *Ibid.*, ix, no. 9, B, ll. 17-29.

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 17-30.

4 *Ibid.*, ii, no. 8, verse 49.

5 *Ibid.*, xi, no. 4, XV, ll. 1-5.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

be said of the *rājaputras*. In the early stage the rank of a *rājaputra* carried with it some kind of land grant. And most probably this grant was made to a vassal who was supposed to render certain services to the state. Thus under the *mahārāja* Samarasiṃha, son of the *mahārāja* Kīrttipāla, his maternal uncle the *rājaputra* Jojala acted as *rājyacintaka*, i. e. a minister or a general administrator¹. A recent study of the Cāhamānas shows that government was carried on by the members of the Nadol family². It is certain that the vassals, mainly kinsmen, were expected to help the chief who granted fiefs to them. What concrete form this help took is difficult to visualise. According to later practices the kinsmen, who received *jāgīrs* from their chief, were bound to help him in times of war and pay him a fee at the time of succession to their estates³. Except for performing these two obligations they functioned practically as little kings in their areas⁴. A somewhat similar position may have obtained under the early Cāhamānas, but we have no contemporary testimony to confirm this.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to hold that all Cāhamāna administration was a family affair. There are good grounds to suppose that certain functionaries who were granted land did not belong to the royal family. As early as 973 Dhandhuka, the *dussādhyā* of the *mahārājādhirāja* Siṃharāja, with the permission of his master gave to the temple of Śiva a village which he possessed in the Khaṭṭakūpa *viṣaya*⁵. He was one of the seven donors, among whom six, including the king, were members of the royal family, and hence made

1 *EI*, xi, no. 4, xviii, p. 53.

2 Under Kelhana outposts of his kingdom were governed by his sons and relatives. Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, p. 202.

3 Baden-Powell, *The Indian Village Community*, pp. 196-202.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *EI*, ii, no. 8, verses 49.

benefacations without consulting any authority¹. It is obvious that this police officer had been granted several other villages besides this. But since he could not make even religious grants without the sanction of the donor, his was a limited assignment. An inscription of 1110 from Mārwar informs us that, in the reign of king Aśvarāja, Uppalarāka, the Great Master of Stables, granted to a temple his share of barley realised from the machine-wells of four villages². We cannot but infer that these villages, a part of the revenues of which he could dispose of freely, had been assigned to him by the king with absolute rights. (It seems that towards the last days of the Cāhamāna rule larger areas were granted as fiefs to ministers.) Kadambavāsa, the chief adviser of Prthivīrāja III, held the title of *maṇḍaleśvara*, which indicates that he was assigned a whole *maṇḍala* by way of salary or to support this dignity³. These three instances show that officials not belonging to the royal kin were granted land.

(The Paramāra epigraphs rarely refer directly to land grants to the members of the ruling clan, of which we have fairly clear proof in the Cāhamāna inscriptions. The only Paramāra record which can be interpreted in this light is a land charter of the time (1011) of Bhoja.⁴ It applies the term *bhoktāramahārājaputra*, apparently a mistake for *bhoktṛmahārājaputra*, to Vatsarāja, who was probably a scion of the ruling family,⁵ and seems to have been in the enjoyment of a fief called Mohadavāsaka,⁶ which about sixty years back was in the personal enjoyment of Siyaka.⁷ But the Paramāra records refer to

1 Ibid.

2 *EI*, xi, no. 4, III, ll. 1-3.

3 Dasharatha Sharma, op. cit., p. 198. It is suggested that he may have been a hereditary ruler of some territories (ibid., fn. 35).

4 *EI*, xxxiii, no 38.

5 Ibid., 193.

6 Ibid, no. 38, ll. 5-6.

7 Ibid, xix, no. 39, Grant A, ll. 8-14.

more groups of villages than we find in the Cāhamāna records. Thus they mention at least 7 groups of villages, 5 groups in units of 12 or its multiple—the highest being of 84, and 2 of them in units of 16 or its multiple¹. These village groups have been taken as clan monarchies, having their origin in the division of the conquered land among the members of the ruling family². There is some support for this view in the mention of 84 rent-free villages in a Paramāra record of the second half of the 11th century A.D.³. The later *chaurāsī* (84) group of villages in Rājputāna shows that this formed the estate of some member of the ruling house. But whether the clan system of administration covered the major part of the Paramāra kingdom cannot be said. Nor can it be shown whether estates were granted to kinsmen as administrative units, or personal estates as fees for administrative service in a wider territorial unit. Perhaps the latter hypothesis is more reasonable. A grant of the Paramāra king Siyaka 11 in 949 refers to his personal estate comprising a whole district, out of which he granted a village⁴. This would suggest that he had been granted some personal estate as crown-prince, although as king he could now make grants out of his personal domain as well as the public domain. At any rate the existing records do not prove that the Paramāra administration was mostly manned

- 1 D. C. Ganguly, *History of the Paramāra Dynasty*, pp. 236-8. A territorial unit called Bhūmigṛha-pāścima-dvipaṇcāśatka mentioned in a charter of A.D. 1019 of Paramāra Bhoja suggests a district consisting of 52 villages, which neither fits in the pattern of the multiples of 12 nor in that of 16 villages. *EI*, xxxiii, no. 42, ll. 5-6.
- 2 Baden-Powell, *Land System of India*, i. p. 251, *The Indian Village Community*, 196-202; U. N. Ghoshal, *Hindu Revenue System*, pp. 236. fn 2, 959.
- 3 *EI*, xix, no. 10. ll. 8-17. The term *mānyaka-paṭṭa* has been rendered as rent-free by R. D. Banerji, *ibid.*, p. 74.
- 4 *sva - bhujiyamāna - mohadavāsaka-viṣaya-sambaddha-kumbhāroṭaka gramāḥ...* *EI*, xix, no. 39, Grants A, ll. 8-14.

by the members of the ruling clan who were enfeoffed with personal estates for their support.)

We hear of about a half a dozen Paramāra official ranks, but we know of land grants only to a few officials. One of them, a high police officer perhaps in charge of criminal administration, the *mahāsādhana* śrī Mahāika, had certainly been endowed with a village, which was regranted by Vākpatirāja of Dhāra in 980, at the request of the wife of that officer, to Bhaṭṭeśvari Devī at Ujjain¹. No such grants can be ascribed to the eleventh century. A grant of 1110, recording two land donations by the provincial governor (*mahāmāṇḍalika*) Rājadeva and one by his wife², shows that the village out of which this gift was made was being enjoyed by the governor³. His wife may also have been given some land for her maintenance. Obviously the village had been allotted to him by the Paramāra king, who alone could notify the various officers, brāhmaṇas and the *pattakilas* of the grant made by the governor and his wife⁴. This is a clear indication that the beneficiary was not free to transfer part of his fief, even for religious purposes, without the sanction of the donor. A later copper-plate of 1260-1 states that Jayavarman II caused the *pratihāra* Gaṅgadeva to give a village to three brāhmaṇas⁵. Since the endowment was actually made by this head of the palace guards, who underwent proper religious ceremonies for the purpose⁶, it is clear that the village was already in his possession. Clearly the grant could not be issued without the permission of his master, who signed it with his own hand and made it a royal charter (*rāja-śāsana*)⁷. Had the king himself been the

1 *IA*, xiv, 160, ll. 9-14.

2 *EI*, xx, no. 11. I have followed the rendering of N. P. Chakravarti and not that of R. D. Banerji (*Ibid.*, p. 109).

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 5-6.

4 *Ibid.*, ll. 4-7.

5 *EI*, ix, no. 13, B, ll. 23-27.

6 *Ibid.*, ll. 28-36.

7 *Ibid.*, ll. 37-53.

donor he would have performed religious formalities for making the benefaction. Thus it is evident that *pratihāras* were granted land as fees for their services. Possibly other officers under the Paramāras were also granted land, but this cannot be shown on the basis of the present inscriptions.

(The Paramāra records mention feudatories and vassals such as *māṇḍalīkas* and *sāmantas*. Some of these, although not related to the ruling houses, were granted large territories for administration.) An important example is that of the vassal (*tat-pāḍakamala-dhyāta*) of Śūrāditya, of the family of Śravaṇabhadra from Kanauj, who had been installed as the lord of Saṅgamakheṭa-*maṇḍala* either by Bhoja or his father Sindhurāja¹. In return he provided military service to his overlord². He may have paid regular or occasional tributes, but that is not on record. Presumably in consideration of military services Śūrāditya and his son and successor Jasorāja enjoyed complete ownership of land in their *maṇḍala*. For we find that in 1047, under Bhoja, Jasorāja made a gift of a whole village and also a hundred acres of land in another village to a Śaivite deity śrī Gaṇeśvara without any reference whatsoever to his overlord³. (Some time between 1061 and 1100⁴ there flourished in Nāsik a vassal called Yaśovarman, who had received half of the town Selluka from Bhoja⁵, and was also the proprietor (*bhoktā*) of 1500 villages⁶,

1 *El*, xix, no. 39, Grant A. ll. 11-12.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Proceedings of (later All-India) Oriental Conference*, i, 325-6

4 *sāhāvāhana-saṃgrāme-anyeṣāṃ-apī bhūbhujāṃ hatvā yodhāṃ sthīrāṃ lakṣmīṃ bhojadeva cakāra yaḥ*. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 325-6.

6 *El*, xix, 70.

7 *śrī-bhojadeva-prasād-āvāpta-nagara se [lluk-ārddha]*. *Ibid.*, no. 10, 1, 7.

8 *s-ārddha-sahasra-grāmāṇāṃ bhoktārāḥ*. *Ibid.*, l. 8. D. C. Ganguly (*History of the Paramāra Dynasty*, p. 236, fn. 1) thinks that Selluka was a *maṇḍala*, but *El*, xix, 10, ll. 7-8, does not warrant such an interpretation.

granted to him by the same overlord. Such a huge grant must have been made to this vassal for some very important services rendered to his sovereign. Perhaps he helped the Paramāra king in the conquest of that area, which did not form a part of Mālwa proper¹). Since he was the governor of a whole *viṣaya* called Audrahādi, Bhoja had possibly granted him half the town and 1500 villages also for administrative services. Under Yaśovarman we have a remarkable example of subinfeudation. In his *viṣaya* there lived *sāmanta* A [mma] *rāṇaka* of the Gaṅga family, who made a grant to a Jain temple² of four pieces of land of varying size, one of which he had received from a prince called Kakkapairāja and another from some townspeople. Kakkapairāja may have been a Paramāra prince, but it is not clear whether the *sāmanta* had received any land from his immediate superior Yaśovarman.

(Under the Caulukyas of Gujarāt groups of 900 and 42 villages appear in a grant by Trilocanapāla of 1051³, which again reminds us of the distribution of the paternal dominion among the scions of the conquering clan.) But, as under the Cāhamānas and Paramāras, under the Caulukyas also areas were perhaps set apart for the personal upkeep of the ruling chief and his kinsmen. Thus a grant of 1091 informs us that Karṇa I had for his enjoyment Ānandapura, to which was attached a unit of 126 villages⁴. The unit of 126, a multiple of 42, suggests that at some stage this group may also have been assigned to a member of the ruling clan.

1 We also hear of a land grant for military service by the Guhila chief Padmasirpha in about 1197. *EI*, xii, no. 37, verses 34-35.

2 *EI*, xiv, no. 10, ll. 8-31.

3 *IA*, xii, 196 ff., verse 32.

4 *EI*, i, no. 36, ll. 3-4. The term *sva-bhujyamāna*, which occurs frequently in the grants of Caulukya rulers, may mean the territory directly enjoyed by the king. This term also occurs in an inscription of Mūlarāja dated 995 (*EI*, x, no. 17, l. 3).

What distinguishes the Caulukyas from other contemporary dynasties is the grant of very large territories to vassals and high officers, the two gradually merging into one another. This can be inferred from the *Lekhapaddhati*, a model of documents compiled in the 15th century, as well as from the Caulukya copper-plates of the 12th-13th centuries. The earliest documents referring to benefices granted by *mahāmātyas* (chief ministers) and *rāṇakas* to their vassals, who in return undertook to furnish their lords with a fixed number of horse and maintain law and order in their fiefs, are ascribed in the *Lekhapaddhati* to 745¹ (V. S. 802), a date assigned to many grants as other documents in that text². But we have no corroborative evidence of such a developed feudal practice in Gujarāt in the 8th century ; on the other hand the mention of a king as having conquered *Garjanikādhirāja* (Mahmud of Ghazni)³ which expression is used in the inscriptions of 1206⁴, and 1223⁵, makes it clear that the specimen *śāsanapatra* dated V. S. 802 (A. D. 745) was in a style 500 years later. The oldest material of the *Lekhapaddhati* may, however, be ascribed to the later half of the 12th century, for it contains two typical expressions used in the Caulukya inscriptions of the period. These are 1) *tan-niyukta-mahāmātya...śrī-śrīkaraṇ-ādi-samasta-mudrā-vyāpārān paripanthayati sati*⁶, and 2) *niyukta daṇḍanāyaka*⁷. Hence many documents dated in V. S. 1288 (A. D. 1231) cannot be far removed from the time to which they refer. One of these throws light on the role of the

1 P. 7.

2 Ibid., pp. 2, 8, 10-15.

3 Ibid., p. 2.

4 *IA*, vi, 194, ll. 1-11. This expression is applied to Mūlarāja II, who reigned from 1175 to 1178.

5 Ibid., p. 197, ll. 14-15.

6 *IA*, xviii, 343, ll. 5-6 Some letters at the beginning of the inscription are missing.

7 Ibid., 347, l. 6.

great vassal Lavaṇaprasāda, whose beginnings as a feudal lord can be traced back to an inscription of Ajayapāla dated 1173. He was appointed a military governor (*daṇḍa* [*nāyaka*]) of Udayapura, situated in the Bhāillasvāmi-*mahādvādaśaka maṇḍala*, where he granted a village situated in a *pathaka* unit of 64 villages, to Śiva¹. Whatever may have been the territorial jurisdiction of Lavaṇaprasāda, it is clear that he could make grants of land in his area without the authorisation of the king. This would imply that he functioned as a full-fledged vassal who could do whatever he liked in his dominions provided he fulfilled certain obligations. From a document in the *Lekhapaddhati* dated 1231 we learn that under Bhīma he flourished as a *mahāmaṇḍalādhipati rāṇaka*, enjoying the *pathaka* of Khetakādhāra as a benefice (*prasāda-pattalā*) granted to him by his overlord². There is no doubt that this benefice had given him enormous powers, for according to the inscription of 1173 Lavaṇaprasāda was a governor appointed by Ajayapāla (*tan-niyukta daṇḍanāyaka*³, but now he appointed his own governor in the Khetakādhāra *pathaka* (*tan-niyukta-daṇḍanāyaka śrī-mādhava* .)⁴. Under Ajayapāla in 1175 we here of another powerful vassal, the Cāhamāna *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* Vaijalladeva, who was governing the province on the banks of the river Narmadā through the favour of the king (*ajayapāladevena-prasādī-kṛtya*⁵. The chief granted a village in his *maṇḍala* without asking assent from his lord⁶, which shows that he enjoyed the legal

1 *IA*, xviii, 347, ll. 1-11 The Prākṛt word Lūṇapasāka given in the inscription is another form of Sanskrit Lavaṇaprasāda, which name occurs in the *Lekhapaddhati*, p. 5.

2 *prabhoḥ prasāda-nmahāmaṇḍalādhipātī-rāṇaka-śrī-lāvanyadeva-prasādena prasāda-pattalāyām bhujyamāna-khetakādhāra-pathaka tan-niyukta-daṇḍanāyaka śrī-mādhavaprabhṛti-paṇcakula-pratipattau tāmra-śāsanam likhyate yathā*. *LP*, p. 5.

3 *IA*, xviii, 347, ll. 1-11.

4 *LP*, p. 5.

5 *IA*, xviii, 84-85, ll. 7-8.

6 *Ibid.*, ll. 9-21.

right of subinfeudation. It is not clear whether the *pathaka* in which he made this grant had been given to him by Ajayapāla by a means of a *pattalā*, which is defined in the *Lekhapaddhati* as a charter conveying a fief for certain stated services. The earliest epigraphic *pattalā* so far known in Gujarāt seems to have been that granted in 1209 to a *mahāmātya-pratihāra* (one combining the office of a minister and head of palace-guards) Somarājadeva, who seems to have received the whole of Saurāṣṭra-*maṇḍala* as a fief from Bhīmadeva¹. Much later in 1260 we hear of a *pattalā*, assigning probably a *pathaka* to a *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara rāṇaka*².

The instances quoted above make it clear that the ruling houses of Northern India, especially of Uttar Pradesh, Central India, Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt, assigned villages for secular services to their vassals and officials. The fact that they recorded many grants on stone or copper indicates not only the growing practice of land assignments but also the growing importance of the secular functionaries, who probably insisted on obtaining permanent title-deeds.

[A typical mode of payment to officers in the 11th and 12th centuries was to earmark regular and exclusive levies for them. Under the Kalacuris* of Baghelkhand lower functionaries such as *paṭṭakilas* (village headmen in charge of revenue collection) and *duṣṭasādhyas* (police officials in charge of criminal administration) were paid in revenues. This can be inferred from a grant of Jayasīṃha (1163-88) to a brāhmaṇa, who is given a village with various rights including taxes (*ādāya*) levied for *paṭṭakilas* and *duṣṭasādhyas*³.] Obviously the *paṭṭakila* collected other royal revenues, besides his own share

1 *asya-prabhoḥ prasād-āvāpta-pattalayā bhujiyamāna-śrī saurāṣṭra-maṇḍale...IA*, xviii, 113, ll. 19-23. These technical terms occur exactly in connection with a model *tāmraśāsana* dated 1231 in the *Lekhapaddhati*, p. 5.

2 *El*, xviii, 210 ff., ll. 8-10.

3 *CH*, iv, no. 63, ll. 19-25 ; Appendix no. 4.

as his remuneration, and as such under weak rulers he could exercise some kind of control over the village land. But this cannot be said of the *duṣṭasādhya*, who was entitled only to his own portion. Taxes were also earmarked for three other kinds of officers, *viśeṇima*, *vaiṣayika* and *ardha-puruṣārika*¹, whose functions cannot be determined. Whatever might be the connection of these officials with the village land, there is no doubt that they were assigned certain revenues for their pay. This was not typical of the Kalacuris, for under the Candellas some lower officials, and under the Gāhaḍavālas even higher officials, were apportioned specified revenues for their maintenance.

(Under the Candellas officers were assigned certain rights in the villages. This development began in the later half of the twelfth century under Paramardin, whose religious grants of 1172 and 1178 enjoin the feudatories, royal officials, forest officials, constables, etc., to give up their perquisites in the villages transferred as gifts². The practice continued under Trailokyavarman, in whose grant of 1208 to a hereditary brāhmaṇa *rāuta* only feudatories and royal officials are asked to give up the rights³. Whether these perquisites were allowed to royal officials in addition to their regular pay (either in kind or land grants) is not clear. But such a practice was bound to create intermediaries with some interests in the land of the tenants. We do not know whether the officials deprived of their rights were otherwise compensated. Nevertheless, occasional resumption of such rights may have prevented perquisites from crystallising into control over the land, which was further made difficult by the plurality of claims to the produce of the peasants.

(In the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom officials enjoyed certain

1 Ibid.

2 *rāja-rājapuruṣ-āṭavika-cāt-ādibhiḥ* *svam* *svam-ābhāvyam* *parihartavyam*.
El, xvi, no. 2, ll. 28-29 ; *ibid.*, xi, no. 14, B plates, ll. 21-23.

3 *CI*, xxxi, no. II, l. 17.

specified sources of revenue. > The *akṣapaṭalika* (officer in charge of accounts and revenues) was entitled to his share of the produce, perhaps amounting to a *prastha* per household, known variously as *akṣapaṭala-prastha*¹ or *akṣapaṭal-ādāya*². Another official, the *pratīhāra* (doorkeeper or the head of the palace guards), was entitled to a similar share in the produce of the villagers³. We also come across a tax called *viśatiathū-prastha*⁴, which on the analogy of the *akṣapaṭala-prastha* and *pratīhāra-prastha* was a *prastha* of the produce paid to some officer. But it is difficult to find any equivalent of *viśatiathu* in the Gāhaḍavāla list of officials, which is obviously not exhaustive. We wonder whether he was in charge of the revenue collection of 28 villages, since we come across a unit of 84 villages in a copper-plate of Madana-pāla⁵. Whatever might be the position and functions of this officer it is not clear whether the *prastha* contribution made to those three officers accounted for their total remuneration or just formed an additional emolument. Here also, since the same peasant had to pay several officers, no one of them could claim rights over his land. Moreover, this practice was not widespread, for the three terms discussed above are mentioned only in the copper-plates of the *mahārājaputra* Govindacandra⁶. The term *akṣapaṭala-prastha*, *pratīhāra-prastha* and *viśatiathū-prastha* are mentioned in the Basāhi plate of 1104⁷. The term *akṣapaṭal-ādāya* occurs in a grant of 1109⁸ and the term *viṃśaticchavatha* (perhaps a

1 *IA*, xiv, 103, l. 12.

2 *IA*, xviii, 17, l. 21.

3 *IA*, xiv, 103, l. 12 ; *EI*, ii, no. 29.

4 *IA*, xiv, 103, l. 12; cf. *EI*, ii, no. 29, ll. 15-16.

5 *Journal of U. P. Historical Society*, xiv, 66 ff. ll. 10-11. Reading amended by Niyogi, op. cit., App. B. no. 8, p. 247.

6 Niyogi, op. cit., p. 167.

7 *IA*, xiv, 103, l. 12.

8 *Ibid.*, xviii. 18-9, ll. 20-8.

variation of *viśatiāṭhū-prastha*) in a grant of 1103¹. (It seems that towards the beginning of the 12th century A.D. some Gāhaḍavāla officials had become so powerful as to claim grants of perquisites for themselves.)

(The practice was limited under the Cāhamānas, who, in order to support a class of military officers known as *balādhipas* imposed a special levy upon the villagers. A copper-plate of 1162 records the grant of a cess called *balādhip-ābhāvyā* of one village to one temple² and of another village to another temple³ by Alhaṇa, the feudatory of the Caulukya king Kumārapāla.) It has been suggested that this due meant a certain share in the revenues of the custom-house or the *maṇḍapikā* with which the *balādhipa* was connected⁴. But since in both cases the cess was levied from the villagers, it seems to have been one of the dues realised from the peasants, and falls in the same category as the *akṣapaṭala-prastha* and *pratīhāra-prastha* under the Gāhaḍavālas. But we have no means to determine whether the *bālādhip-ābhāvyā* formed the whole or a part of the fee of the *balādhipa*, who stood next in rank to the *senāpati*.

The origin and evolution of the levies meant for various officials deserve some attention. What began in the early centuries of the Christian era as supply of provisions and rations for boarding and lodging such policemen and soldiers (*cāṭas* and *bhaṭas*) as visited the countryside to apprehend criminals eventually developed into regular fees reserved for *paṭṭakila*, *duṣṭasādhyā*, *akṣapaṭala*, *pratīhāra*, *balādhipa*, and various other government functionaries (*rājapuruṣās*). In earlier times the provisions to be supplied by the villagers for the boarding and lodging of the touring officers are specified in the Vākāṭaka, Pallava and Kadamba

1 *EI*, ii, no. 29, I. ll. 15-6.

2 *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, p. 187, plate II, ll. 9-11.

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 13-14.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 295, fn. 85.

grants¹. A small tax, *vasati-daṇḍa*, was also levied for the purpose and probably collected in kind². In the 6th century a tax called *jemaka-kara-bhara* was levied for providing meals to royal officers in some parts of Madhya Pradesh³. But the early grants do not speak of any regular dues meant for the remuneration of royal functionaries. The only tax that can be possibly interpreted in this light is *rāj-ābhāvyā*, dues meant for members of the royal family, which appears in the Gupta period in some grants from Central India⁴. In the later period, in the time of the Pālas, *rāja-bhāvyā*, *rājakulīyā*, *rājakul-ābhāvyā* or *rājakul-ādeya* was levied for the maintenance of the royal family. Generally we do not come across these dues after the 10th century, because members of the ruling family, princes and queens, were now assigned fiefs for their maintenance. But probably the system did not cover all the royal officials, some of whom were allotted definite dues for their upkeep. What was occasional contribution to lower royal functionaries and perhaps regular payment to the royal household in earlier times became a normal imposition for the support of some officers of the Kalacūris, Candellas, Gāhaḍavālas and Cāhamānas. A parallel practice obtained under the Śilāhāras in Mahārāṣṭra, where hereditary holders of the office of *nārgāvunḍa* were not given gold for their salary but assigned certain taxes as long as they performed the functions of their office⁵. Hence to specify items of revenue for payment of officers was a distinct development of this period.

(Although vassals and officials were both paid in land grants, there existed certain differences between the two. Civil and military officers such as the *purohitas*, *jyotiṣīs*,

1 *CH*, iv, 156 fn. 2.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *Ibid.*, no. 120, ll. 18-20.

4 *CH*, iii, no. 26, ll. 11-12 ; no. 27, l. 13 ; no. 28, l. 20.

5 *EL*, xxvii, 179 and fn. 1.

sāndhivigrahikas, *sacivas*, *pratihāras*, *mahāsāadhanikas*, *mahāmātyas*, etc., were granted land for more or less well-defined functions, which pertained to their respective offices. But the vassals had numerous functions to perform. The members of the ruling clan of the Cāhamānas and Paramāras were possibly charged with all kinds of duties, executive, judicial and military, on the king's behalf in the areas placed under them, and as fees they received personal estates comprising a certain number of villages. Similar undifferentiated functions were probably performed by many vassals, who were not related to the king.) Although the inscriptions mention numerous grades of vassal, such as *rājā*, *rājarājanaka*, *rāṇaka*, *rājaputra*, *ṭhakkura*, *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *mahāsāmantādhipati*, *mahāsāmanta-rāṇaka*, *sāmantaka-rājā*, *bhoktā*, *bhogika*, *bhogijana*, *bhogapatika*, *bṛhadbhogika*¹, etc., the surviving epigraphic records refer only to grants made to *sāmantas*, *mahāsāmantas*, *rāṇakas*, *rājaputras*, and *māṇḍalikas*. How wide was the area entrusted to each category of these vassals is difficult to say. The *Śukranītisāra*, which contains some terms used in the inscriptions of the 11th-12th centuries, defines a *sāmanta* as the governor of 100 villages, yielding an annual revenue of 13,00,000 *karṣas*². The same source states that the annual income of the *māṇḍalika* is from 3,00,000 to 10,00,000 *karṣas*³. These statements may give some idea of the relative status of the vassals, but they cannot be taken literally. Whatever might be the size of the areas assigned to vassals, some *rāṇakas* and *maṇḍaleśvaras* enjoyed practical ownership of land, for they executed religious grants without the permission of their overlords. In contrast to them the officials, including the provincial governor, had to secure the

1 Some of these have been listed in R. K. Choudhary's article in *JIH*, xxvii, 389.

2 Tr., B. K. Sarkar, l. 365-7, 381-2. Recently L. Gopal has shown that the text was compiled in the first half of the 19th century (*BSOAS*, xxv, pt. 3, 1962).

3 Ibid., l. 368-74.

order of their master in order to make such gifts. Further, many vassals were connected by blood with their lord, but officials generally did not have such ties with the king. Even the vassals were not always related to the ruling house. The Pālas granted land to Kaivarttas, with whom they had no blood connections whatsoever. Similarly there is nothing to show that the *sāmantas* in Orissa and *rāṇakas* in Gujarāt were the kinsmen of their overlords. (Most officials who were granted fiefs in the other parts of the country did not belong to the kin of the grantor—a feature characteristic of the Rājput polity in Rājasthān and Gujarāt. Epigraphic evidence shows that in India land grants were first made to priests and only later extended to non-priestly elements such as brāhmaṇa, kāyastha and unrelated kṣatriya officials and vassals. The grant of land was not necessarily governed by the kinship principle, but by the need of rewarding services.)

(The relation between the vassal and the lord in Northern India during our period partly resembles the state of affairs in France and Germany, where the chief obligation of the vassals was to provide military service to their lord¹. The literary and epigraphic records leave no doubt that the most important duty of the vassal was to furnish military aid to the lord.) The *Tilaka-maṇjarī* of Dhanapāla has numerous references to show that the *sāmantas* invariably accompanied the lord in military expeditions², and the same impression is created by Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*³, which shows that, along with the *mantrins*, the *sāmantas* constituted an important element of the body politic⁴. (Although the

1 In England they were also expected to tender counsel to their overlord in running the affairs of the realm and assist him in the administration of justice. Such an obligation was not demanded of the vassals in India.

2 Pp. 71, 74, 93, 100.

3 Pp. 17, 32, 80.

4 P. 17.

Pālas maintained a standing army consisting of peoples of various nationalities¹, the plight of Rāmapāla at the time of the Kaivartta revolt shows how utterly dependent the later Pālas were on the military aid of their feudatories.) During our period the dynasties of Northern India probably relied more on the quotas supplied to them by their vassals than on their own forces. Perhaps each ruler kept some permanent military force, but how the soldiers were paid from the 11th century onwards is not known. Lakṣmīdhara, the minister of the Gāhaḍavāla king Govindacandra, enjoins that in addition to their remuneration (*vetana*) distinguished warriors should be rewarded with clothes, etc.² But the use of the term *vetana* is not sufficient to establish that salaries were paid in cash.

(Military beneficiaries appear as a very numerous class of grantees in our inscriptions, and are known as the *rāutas* under the Candellas and Gāhaḍavālas, and the *rājaputras* under the Caulukyas.) The term *rāuta* is an early vernacular form of the Sanskrit *rājaputra*, and it possibly indicated a rank in mediaeval times. In its literal meaning the term can be applied only to the Cāhamāna, and possibly the Caulukya, *rājaputras*, who were the scions of the respective royal families. But the *rāutas* in Bundelkhand and Uttar Pradesh belonged to the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and kāyastha communities, and were mostly unrelated to the ruling clan. (The Candella grants leave no doubt that the *rāutas* were granted land for military service. This possibly also accounts for six grants to the kṣatriya *rāuta* Rājyadharavarman under the Gāhaḍavāla king Jayaccandra. Thus the *rāuta* seems to have been a vassal whose dominant function in the state was rendering military service,) which, according to the *Lekhapaddhati*, was also the most important

1 *gauḍa-mālava-khaṣa-hūṇa-kulika-karṇāṭa-lāṭa - cāṭa - bhaṭa-sevak - ūdin*. *EI*, xxix, no. IB, ll. 38-39.

2 *Kṛtyakalpataru*, xi, 82.

obligation of his counterpart, the *rājaputra*. A similar class of military vassals known as *nāyakas*, some of them of the *vaiśya* caste, existed under the Eastern Gaṅgas, who made several land grants to them. The *Śukranītisāra* defines the *nāyaka* as the functionary appointed over ten villages, but the inscriptions do not give any precise idea about his territorial jurisdiction. What is more important is that some families held the rank of *rāuta* or *nāyaka*, especially the first, consecutively for three generations. This led to the emergence of a considerable hereditary military class, living on fiefs assigned to its members¹. The new development, not found in earlier times, strongly reminds us of similar hereditary military families in Europe.

Inscriptions indicate that during this period the vassals played an important part in politics and administration. Their role in some succession disputes was decisive. The earlier case of Gopāla is well known. In later times succession to the throne seems to have been decided by the feudal elements; here we may quote the examples of Śālastambha in Assam, of the Somavamśī rulers of Orissa, and also of the Cāhamānas. Thus when Pṛthivīrāja II died sonless, the ministers, who in our opinion were hardly different from feudal lords, brought over Someśvara from Gujarāt and put him on the throne of Ajmer. On his death they made the widowed Queen Karpūradevī the regent for her minor son Pṛthivīrāja III². Similarly in Kashmir along with the ministers, *tantrins* and *ekāṅgas*, the *sāmantas* were sometimes summoned to choose the king³.

(In certain areas during the 12th and 13th centuries princes were not as free to make land grants as they

1 The problem has been discussed at length by Dr. Mrs. K. K. Gopal in "Feudal Composition of the Army in Early Medieval India" in the *Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society*, xxviii, 30-49.

2 Dasharatha Sharma, op. cit., p. 199.

3 *Rājatarāṅgi*, V. 250.

had been earlier. The authority of the *mahāmātya*, who was a kind of highly feudalised ministerial functionary in the Caulukya kingdom, had to be invoked in the charters issued by the Caulukya rulers,—a practice never followed in earlier times. While this did not fetter the hands of the donor, it certainly made him consult fully with the *mahāmātya* in regard to land grants.

Early grants only name the officers, especially the minister of peace and war and the *dūtaka* responsible for the execution of the grant. They rarely indicate whether these officials approved of the grants. But some grants of our period, particularly of the late 12th and 13th centuries, record their consent to land gifts. Thus a plate of the Paramāra king Jayavarman II (in 1260-1) records the approbation of the *sāndhivigrahika*, the paṇḍita Mālādhara, to a grant of a village made by Jayavarman to some brāhmaṇas¹. The growing importance of the vassals and officials in relation to land grants is also indicated by some Sena charters. Early Sena grants contain not more than two endorsements, one by the king and the other by the *mahā-sāndhivigrahika*. But the grants of the 25th and 27th year of the reign of Lakṣmaṇasena demonstrate the increasing dominance of high officials, mostly feudalised, whose favour and assent were considered desirable for the maintenance of the grants. A grant records the endorsement of as many as five dignitaries, probably including the king².

Despite the influence exercised by the vassals in politics and administration they were never organised in any group or council as in England. The term *sāmanta-cakra*, the circle of vassals, so familiar in literature and inscriptions, is nothing more than a cliché which

1 *El*, ix, 119.

2 *JRASB*, series III, viii, 34-35; the five endorsements are of (1) *śrī ni*, (2) *mahāsaṃ ni*, (3) *śrī madrāja ni*, (4) *śrī madśaṅkara ni* and (5) *śrīmat śāhasamolla ni*.

does not indicate any corporate body. Perhaps it was used in the same manner as *kavicaakra* (circle of poets)¹.

(The vassals may have constituted some sort of court presided over by the overlord, but it cannot be regarded as a deliberative assembly through which the organised voice of the barons was expressed.) At best it seems to have been the prototype of the *durbār* which developed in Muslim times and not of the mother of Parliament which developed in mediaeval England. (The vassals may have performed judicial, legislative and administrative functions separately in their respective jurisdictions, but they never did this jointly as a body.) Nevertheless, the *sāmantas* had come to be recognised as a hereditary social class, as can be inferred from the adjective *sāmanta-janmā* applied to Vākpatirāja Sūri. It is said that although he was born as a *sāmanta* he attained the highest position among the leading poets².

(The general trend towards feudalising officials reached its height during our period. This was reflected not only in paying them by land grants but also in giving them high-sounding titles which were not meant to indicate their functions but to emphasise their high rank. This tendency is most marked in Bengal and Bihar.) Thus a mere *mahāmāṇḍalika* Īśvaraghoṣa, a feudatory of the Pālas, addresses his grant to more than four dozen officials, of whom 13 bear the prefix *mahā*³ (great). Similarly another *mahāmāṇḍalika*, Saṃgrāma Gupta of south Monghyr, notifies his grant to various officials and dignitaries, eighteen of whom bear the prefix *mahā*⁴.

1 *Udayasundarikathā*, p. 27.

2 *sāmanta-janm-āpi kavivarāṇām mahattamo vākpatirājasūriḥ*. Ibid., p. 154.

3 These may be enumerated as *mahāsāndhivigrahika*, *mahāpratihāra*, *mahākaraṇādhyakṣa*, *mahāpādamūlika*, *mahābhogapati*, *mahātantrādhiṣṭha*, *mahāvyūhapati*, *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*, *mahākāyastha*, *mahābalakoṣṭhika*, **mahābalādhiṣṭhika*, *mahāsāmanta* and *mahākaṭuka*. *IB*, iii, 156-7, ll. 10-21.

4 *JBORS*, v, 593-4, ll. 6-8.

The charters of the Pālas and other dynasties of Bengal and Bihar mark a progressive rise in the number of officials with the prefix *mahā* in their designations. In the beginning they mention four or five under Dharmapāla and Devapāla, later 9 under Nārāyaṇapāla, Vallālasena and Lakṣmaṇasena, next 17 under Īśvara-ghoṣa, and finally 18 under Saṃgrāma Gupta, when the feudalisation of officials reaches its zenith. Here it is striking that the lower the power of the lord the larger the number of the dignitaries bearing the title *mahā* in his kingdom, and similarly the later the kingdom the greater the number of *mahā*-bearing functionaries.

(Curiously enough feudal lords in other parts of India do not display much love of high-flown titles, except in the Kalacuri kingdom where as many as 14 functionaries have the title *mahā* affixed to their names¹. But the title *rāṇaka* and *ṭhakkura* become common feudal epithets in Northern India and are applied indiscriminately to officials of different castes and categories.) This is best illustrated in the case of kāyastha scribes, who were invested with these titles to indicate their feudal and social rank and not their functions. It seems that officials were placed in various feudal categories according to their political status and importance.)

Since the first land grants were made to priests and temples, who continued to receive the majority of these throughout our period, most grants to officials and vassals faithfully followed the religious form and even repeated the imprecatory verses. The religious draft could well be used for those brāhmaṇas who held civil and military offices, for, because of their hereditary religious position, they were entitled to gifts in their own right. But in the grants to non-brāhmaṇa vassals and officials the prevailing form had to be adopted for want of an alternative. Gradually there evolved a form

1 *CH*, iv, no. 48, ll. 32-35. The list, however, also includes *mahādevi* and *mahārājaputra*.

of draft for secular grants, slowly deviating from its religious prototype. Thus in a grant to a *kāyastha* minister in Orissa, about the beginning of the 11th century, the clause of perpetual endowment is left out¹, although the provisions relating to the enjoyment of all rights in the village and the spiritual merit accruing to the donor are retained. This also applies to a few grants made by the Candellas to *rāutas*². A Candella grant made to a hereditary *brāhmaṇa rāuta* also omits the clause of perpetual tenure³. But this provision is retained in a *Śilāhāra* charter of 1115, according to which Gaṇḍarāditya assigned two villages to his vassal (*sāmanta*) Nalamba to be enjoyed by his descendants as long as the sun and moon last⁴, although he did not speak of religious merit in this context. However, no epigraphic land grant is couched in an entirely secular form. This terminology, briefly provided in the law-books of the Gupta period, is elaborated in the *Lekha-paddhati*, which dispenses with religious formulae in its specimens of grants by *rājas*, *mahāmātyas* and *rāṇakas*. The exact epigraphic duplicates of these charters (*pattalās*) have not yet been discovered, although it is definite that these were granted by the Caulukya rulers. The origin of the term *pattalā* is obscure. But if it is taken as an early form of the Hindī word *pattal* (Gujarātī *pātal*), it would imply provision for food or maintenance. The Candella grants of the 13th century use the term *prasādena pradatta*, bestowed by the favour of the king⁵. The grants of Western India of the 12th and 13th centuries use the phrase *prabhu-prasād-āvāpta*, acquired

1 *El*, xxix, no. 26.

2 *Ibid*, xvi, no. 20 ; xx, no. 1C.

3 *El*, xxxi, no. 11. This was an hereditary military family for four generations.

4 *El*, xxvi, no. 32, ll. 38-61.

5 *El*, xvi, no. 20, l. 11 ; xx, no. 14C, l. 14.

through the favour of the lord¹. Such wordings do not occur in grants to gods and priests, and indicate that in legal terms the beneficiary did not owe the grant to his services or ability but to the favour and goodwill of the master. Curiously enough none of the secular grants clearly states the obligations of the beneficiaries, which are laid down only by the *Lekhapaddhati*. Therefore for the country as a whole there did not exist any legal norm to which the parties could appeal in case of dispute or violation of engagements entered between the two.

The didactic texts generally do not impose any obligations either on the *sāmantas* or on their lords; political experience was hardly embodied in ideology. The only theoretical text which seems to define the duties of the vassals is the *Agni Purāṇa*, a work of about the 10th-11th century, and what it states is mainly based on the *Kāmandaka Nītisāra*, ascribed to the 8th century A.D. The *sāmantas* are advised to assuage public feeling, to help their overlord in war, to mobilise his (the overlord's) allies and auxiliaries, and to distinguish friends from enemies. They are further asked to protect the people (*janatrāṇam*) like a fort²,—a function that devolved on them from their sovereign. On the other hand the king is advised to be on his guard against the vassals, whose revolt is considered to be an external danger in contrast to the internal danger caused by the disaffection of princes, ministers and other high functionaries³. The *Agni Purāṇa* therefore instructs the king to destroy disloyal feudatories⁴. But hardly any other didactic text of the period prescribes the mutual obligations of the sovereign and vassals.

The only legal text which clearly defines the

1 Ibid., xix, no. 10, l. 17. The variant *prasādi-kṛtya* is found in *IA*, xviii, 84-85, l. 8.

2 Tr. M. N. Dutt, ii, 865.

3 226. 11.

4 227. 53.

obligations of the fief-holders is the *Lekhapaddhati*, which reflects conditions in Gujarāt in the 12th-13th centuries. This text refers to three kinds of charters written on the bark of a birch-tree : (a) the charter of a king (*rājñe bhūrja-pattalā*) who could grant a *rāṇaka* a country (*deśa*), probably a *maṇḍala* under the Caulukyas, excluding the grants made to temples and brāhmaṇas¹ ; (b) the charter of a *mahāmātya* (*mahāmātya-pattalā*) issued to a *rāṇaka* who accepted it and undertook to pay all dues to the grantor loyally and honestly² ; and (c) finally the charter of a *rāṇaka* (*rāṇaka-pattalā*). The last deserves special attention, for it provides us details which are not found under the first two heads. In this case a *rājaputra* applies to the *rāṇaka* for a fief. When he is granted a village, he is required not only to maintain law and order in it, and collect revenues according to old, just practices, but also to furnish 100 foot-soldiers and 20 cavalry for the service of the *rāṇaka* at his headquarters³. What is further important is that he acquires some sort of right over the land granted to him. This can be inferred from one of his obligations, which does not allow him to make gifts of uncultivated land to temples and brāhmaṇas⁴. This may imply that he is authorised to make grants only of cultivated land in the village. This clause therefore reverses the old practice sanctioned by the *bhūmicchidranyāya*, according to which at first only waste land was granted to priests and temples, although from the fifth century onwards this technical term continued to be used even in grants of cultivated land⁵. The insertion of the above provision would suggest that by the end of the 12th century in Gujārat the progressive

1 *LP*, p. 7.

2 *Ibid*.

3 ...*grāmasya asya āya padam bhogavatū (bhuñjatū) padatijana 100 ghoṭaka 20 etaiḥ ghoṭaka mānuṣaiḥ kaṭake rājadhānyām śrī-asmākaṃ sevā kāryā*. *Ibid*.

4 *navatara-bhūmi śāsane kasy-āpi devasya viprasya vā na dātavyā*. *LP*, p. 7.

5 *Supra*, pp. 36-38.

role of land grants in opening waste land to cultivation had definitely come to an end.

The contracts given in the *Lekhapaddhati* are important because they clearly state the obligations of the parties, so difficult to infer from the inscriptions. This is not done in the first *pattalā*, but the second, and especially the third, indicate a full-fledged feudal polity in Gujārat. They clearly show that the king or his *mahāmātya*—these two together are invariably referred to in 12th and 13th century Caulukya epigraphic grants made by vassals—granted fiefs to *rāṇakas*, and they subinfeuded land to *rājapūtras*.

In their turn, the *rājaputras*, as we learn from the forms of contracts for the collection of the village revenues (*grāma-paṭṭakas*), farmed out their villages to merchants and their associates, who applied to them for the purpose¹. According to one document the *pañcakula* led by a merchant or accountant (*mahantaka*) is entrusted with the work of collection on condition of paying 3000 drammas as the main head of revenue, 216 drammas for rewards to the *pañcakula*, and forty drammas for miscellaneous expenses². The main revenue is to be paid in three instalments³. In addition to the stipulated amount the merchant and his associates are required to pay any increased rent, a tax imposed on the village for honouring a particular man, a tax on villagers on the birth of a prince to the royal or chief's family and similar other occasions, and charges for a police station⁴. The village collectors are also charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the roads that pass through the village. The contract has to be accompanied by a guarantee given by another

1 *LP*, pp. 8-9.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *caṣṭhapaḥ-malamārgaṇa-māṅgaliyaka-caturaka-palitaṁ deśācāreṇa dātavyaṁ. LP*, p. 9.

rājaputra, who undertakes to make the merchant and his associates pay¹. The document which gives these details is dated 745, but there is no doubt that it throws light on the revenue system in the 12th-13th centuries. The practice of *grāma-paṭṭakas* shows that many *rājaputras* held more than one village, from which they could not collect taxes themselves. And hence, having made the assessment in terms of cash, they entrusted the collection to merchants, who because of thriving trade and commerce in Gujarāt were in a position to accept this responsibility. They were not revenue farmers making the highest bid, but agents bound by the amount agreed upon in the contract. The real master of the village was the *rājaputra*, who could not only grant land but also increase taxes and farm them out to whomsoever he liked.

The *grāmapaṭṭakas* were apparently valid for a year, but there is no indication of any time limit in the charters granted by *rājās*, *mahāmātyas* and *rāṇakas*. Perhaps they lasted for life or during good behaviour, and presumably had to be renewed on the death of either party. It is not clear whether in case of a dispute between the *rāṇaka* and his vassal *rājaputra* the king intervened. Since these engagements were written on birch bark, none have come to light, but there is no reason to doubt their authenticity.

By and large the relation between the lord and the vassal seems to have been regulated by custom, which was not clearly defined anywhere before about the 13th century. In the earlier period when kingdoms were larger the lord could take advantage of the absence of written law to exact more obligations than were customary from the vassals, but in the period under review it would work the other way. The vassal could exploit the situation in his favour, for there could be

¹ *LP*, p. 9.

no better condition for asserting his power than the presence of numerous kingdoms in Northern India on the eve of the Turkish conquest.

The theoretical position that vassals and high functionaries should be remunerated by grants of land came to be well recognised in the 12th century. Earlier texts expatiate on the merits of grants of villages for religious purposes but do not recommend large-scale grants for secular purposes, which is unequivocally done by the *Mānasollāsa*, a work of the 12th century. It advises the king to make various kinds of gifts, including those of territories, to leading vassals (*sāmāntamānyakas*), and various grades of ministers¹, such as *mantrins*, *amātyas* and *sacivas*. Gifts should be also made to servants (*bhṛtyas*), kinsmen (*bāndhavas*) and other people who render military help to the king and tender him counsel². Altogether 16 kinds of secular gifts are listed, and they include not only distribution of villages, towns, mines and marks of honour comprising seats, *cāmara*, umbrella and means of conveyance but also that of virgin girls and prostitutes³. Of the land assignments mentioned herein are *deśyam*, the gift of a subdivision (*rāṣṭra*) presumably exempt from taxes, *karajam*, a similar gift with the obligation to pay taxes⁴, and *grāmajam*, the gift of a village with or without taxes⁵.

The practice of making land grants had become almost universal in Mālwa and Gujarāt. This is reflected in a chapter of the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* of Merutuṅga, dealing with the Paramāra Bhoja and the Caulukya Bhīma. He states that the lord of the country gives away a village, the lord of the village a field, and the lord of the field some vegetables ; every contented person gives

1 II. 1006.

2 Ibid., 1007.

3 Ibid., 1010-11.

4 Ibid., 1014.

5 Ibid., 1016.

away his property¹. This would imply that ownership of the village by individuals had come to be recognised as a normal feature by 1304, when Merutuṅga completed his work. Many of these *grāmādhīśas* may have been Jain and brāhmaṇa temples and individuals ; but others may have been just vassals or officials who were granted villages by the Paramāra and Caulukya rulers. In some cases the *paṭṭakilas*², who were so designated because they received charters (*paṭas*) for revenue collection from the king, may have developed into village lords, with the difference that they had to forward a portion of the revenues collected to the central treasury.

In spite of numerous references to the term *sāmanta* and its various formations and synonyms the earlier texts do not provide any ideological basis for political feudalism, which shows that it had not taken any deep roots in the consciousness of the people before the 11th century A. D. Even the legal commentaries do not betray awareness of the new development, for the *Mitākṣarā* continues to use the term *sāmanta* in the traditional sense of neighbour. Surprisingly enough the theoretical basis of political feudalism is found in the texts on art and architecture. An integrated theoretical picture of feudal hierarchy is provided by the *Mānasāra*, a work of about the 12th century. Chapter 42 of this text classifies kings in descending order of status into nine classes, *cakravartin*, *mahārāja*, (or *adhirāja*,) *mahendra* (or *narendra*), *pārṣṇika*, *paṭṭadhara*, *maṇḍaleśa*, *paṭṭabhāj*, *prahāraka* and *astragrāhin*³. The number of their horses, elephants, soldiers, women and queens is prescribed accordingly. The *astragrāhin*, the lowest in rank, is entitled to have 500 horses. 500 elephants, 50,000 soldiers,

1 *deś-ādhiśo grāmam-ekaṃ dadāti, grām-ādhiśaḥ kṣetram-ekaṃ dadāti ; kṣetrādhīśaḥ - śimbhikāḥ - sampradatte, sārvaś-tuṣṭaḥ - sampadaṃ - svām-dadāti. Prabandhaśintāmaṇi, p. 57.*

2 *EI, ix, no. 13, l. 18 ; IA, vi, 48 ff.*

3 P. K. Acharya, *Mānasāra Series*, vi, 125.

500 women attendants, and one queen¹. This equipment goes on multiplying with increase in rank till it reaches the highest figure in the case of the *cakravartin* or universal monarch². The *Mānasāra* also describes nine kinds of crowns and nine kinds of thrones according to the difference in status of the rulers³. What is most important for our purpose is the differing rate of royal revenue according to the position of the king. The *cakravartin* takes only one-tenth of the produce as his share, the *mahārāja* takes one-sixth, the *narendra* one-fifth, the *pārṣṇika* one-fourth and the *paṭṭadhara* one-third⁴. The exact rates of the other four kinds of rulers *maṇḍaleśa*, *paṭṭabhāj*, *prāhāraka* and *astragrāhin* are not given, but the context would make it half and even more than half of the produce. What is the significance of this type of formulation? In our opinion the whole scheme visualises a state of affairs in which the ruler of a lower rank is in a position where he has to pay tribute to the ruler of a higher rank; only in this context can we understand a system in which the lower the royal rank the higher the revenue to be realised by its holder from the subjects.

Similarly the *Aparājita-pricchā* of Bhaṭṭa Bhuvanadeva, a work of the 12th century⁵, enumerates in descending order nine categories of rulers known as *mahīpati*, *rājā*, *narādhipa*, *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*, *māṇḍalika*, *mahāsāmanta*, *sāmanta*, *laghusāmanta* and *caturaśika*⁶. In each case the extent of territory held is specified, and it ranges from the whole earth in respect of the *mahīpati* to 1000 villages in respect of the *caturaśika*⁷. The lowest category is not given any nomenclature, but apparently the holders

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 126; this is found in chapters 45 and 49 of the text.

4 Ibid.

5 Ed. P. A. Mankad. *GOS*, no. CXV, p. xii.

6 81, 2-10.

7 Ibid.

of villages from one to twenty and probably 100 are placed in this class¹. Although the division of rulers laid down in the two texts on architecture does not seem to have been observed, this framework fits in with the feudalisation of political structure in mediaeval times, which provides many instances of graded subordinate relations linked up with tribute and service.

The *Aparājitapṛcchā* also describes the composition of a typical feudal court. It recommends that the emperor (*samrāt*) who holds the title of *mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara* should have in his court 4 *maṇḍaleśas*, 12 *māṇḍalikas*, 16 *mahāsāmantas*, 32 *sāmantas*, 160 *laghusāmantas*, and 400 *caturaśikas*², below whom all the others were known as *rājaputras*³. It further lays down that the income of the *laghusāmanta* should amount to 5,000, of the *sāmanta* to 10,000, and of the *mahāsāmanta* to 20,000, a scheme also supported by a 14th century work on architecture, the *Rājavallabhamanḍana*⁴. The text, however, does not fix the rate of revenue to be realised by those chiefs from their subjects, but it does provide a systematised hierarchy in terms of political and economic power.

Early legal and other texts conceive differences in political power, income, houses, resources, etc., in terms of varṇas only, but the position changes in the works on architecture. Privileges are no longer assigned to the people exclusively according to their hereditary varṇa. On the other hand an attempt is made to reconcile the status based on varṇa with that based on feudal hierarchy. This is noticeable in a few passages on architecture in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira and in the *Mayamata*. Varāhamihira speaks of the size of the houses of the various categories of ruling chief

1 81. 11-12.

2 71. 33-34, 39.

3 Agrawala, *Harṣacarita*, op. cit., p. 178, fn. 3.

4 Quoted by Agrawala, p. 203.

and also of the four varṇas. The *Mayamata* lays down that the king of the whole earth should have an eleven-storeyed house, the brāhmaṇas (*dvijāti*) a nine-storeyed house (*navabhūmiḥ*), the ordinary kings (*nṛpas*) a seven-storeyed house, the vaiśyas and ordinary captains (*yodhaseneśa*) a four-storeyed house, the śūdras a house ranging from one to three storeys, and the *sāmantapramukhas*, etc., a five-storeyed house (*pañcabhūmakam*)¹. Here different categories of kings and *sāmantas* are introduced in the housing scheme more clearly than is done by Varāhamihira. The *Aparājitapṛcchā*, however, does not take account of varṇa in prescribing the size of the house, which is determined by the relative status of the feudal elements. It clearly lays down the size of residence of each one of the nine categories of chiefs, including *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*, *māṇḍalika*, *mahāsāmanta*, *sāmanta* and *laghu-sāmanta*, and of some others who are lower in the scale². But the use of a *siṃhadvāra* is permitted only to the *cakravartin*, *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*, *mahāsāmanta* and *sāmanta*, and not to those lower in rank³. According to the *Mānasāra* members of all four castes can become *prahāra*kas and *astragrāhins*, the last two categories of rulers, and their privileges vary according to the rank. Thus by transcending considerations of varṇa these texts provide a basis for the emerging social and political organisation which can no longer be ignored.

At the end of this chapter we may note the existence in Northern India of numerous principalities, many of which owed their origin to the widespread practice of land grants or the partition of ancestral dominions among the princes of the ruling family. Of course direct records of grants for military and administrative service are not as many as those of grants to priests

1 *Mayamata*, xxix. 80-2; the meaning of "śaṭatalam maṇḍali-kūḍya pañcabhūm-āvarājate" (*ibid.*, 81) seems to be obscure.

2 *ibid.*, 2-12.

3 *ibid.*, 21-24.

and temples. In fact many records which give a clue to assignments to officials and vassals are actually religious grants made by these dignitaries. (In India we do not notice any counterpart of the struggle between the Papacy and the State, which characterised the history of mediaeval Europe. While in the middle of the 9th century the Carolingians confiscated the property of the Church and granted it to their secular vassals¹, in India, whatever the complexion and nature of the ruling dynasties, they vied with one another in making religious grants. Religious and secular vassals grew at the cost of the regular officials, who themselves acquired a similar status because of their payment in land grants.) Of course, conditions in Eastern India were different from those in Gujarāt and Rājasthān, where the relation between the lord and his vassal was governed by contracts. The comparative absence of secular copper-plate charters under the Pālas and Senas suggests that ordinarily royal servants and feudal lords were not allowed to become powerful enough to claim a lasting basis for their grants, as was the case under the Caulukyas, Paramāras, Cāhamānas, Gāhaḍavālas, Candellas and the rulers of Orissa.)

[The period also bears witness to the growing practice of earmarking dues for officials in Baghelkhand, Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Rājasthān.] The custom continued under Muslim rule, for Sher Shah reserved certain dues for the payment of his collectors. [Finally, by this time the feudal system was so well established that it came to be reflected in the Sanskrit texts, which were slow and conservative in recognising changes that did not fit in with the fourfold social order outlined in the Dharmaśāstras. The *Mānasollāsa*, the *Lekhapaddhati* and several texts on art and architecture give a picture of the feudal hierarchy which is not found in the earlier

¹ Ganshof, *Feudalism*, pp. 35-36.



works. Some texts of the period boldly recommend gifts of land for secular purposes, and others clearly lay down the obligations of the secular beneficiaries. All these factors provided a congenial climate for the introduction of the fief system by the Sultans of Delhi.)

CHAPTER VI

THE CLIMAX AND DECLINE OF FEUDAL ECONOMY

(c. A.D. 1000-1200)

A thorough regional survey of villages granted to priests, temples, vassals and officials in Northern India can be attempted on the basis of the available land charters in the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest, but what has been done here is to present a conspectus wide enough to indicate the increasing trend of granting villages throughout the country from Assam in the east to Gujarāt in the west, from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya in the south.

It seems that the village as an economic unit based on the producing activities of the peasants and artisans did not exist in Assam, for the land grants mostly refer to big plots of land being given away to the brāhmaṇas in forest and hilly areas intersected by rivers, and hence not conducive to the formation of regular villages. Thus a copper-plate of Balavarmma (975) refers to the grants of 4,000 measures of rice¹, and another copper-plate (of Ratnapāla 1010-50) speaks of a grant of land producing 2000 measures of rice². Similarly the Gauhati copper-plate of Indrapāla makes a religious grant of land yielding 4,000 measures of rice³. These three instances are sufficient to show that plots of land with considerable yield continued to be granted for religious purposes.

As we move eastwards into Bengal ruled by the Pālas and Senas, we notice villages, as distinct from areas

1 *JBAS*, lxvi pt. I, 291-2.

2 *Ibid.*, lxvii, pt. I, 120.

3 *JBAS*, lxvi, pt. I, 130-1, lines 6-9.

of land, being transferred to the beneficiaries. Of the Pāla rulers of our period Vigrahapāla III granted half a village somewhere in the present Saharsa District to a brāhmaṇa¹. Similarly Madanapāla (1140-55) granted a village in North Bengal to a brāhmaṇa from Campāhiṭṭi². The process was carried forward by the feudatories of the Pālas. Īśvaraghoṣa, probably a feudatory of Vigrahapāla III, granted a village in South Bengal to a brāhmaṇa from Candavāra³. In East Bengal a plot of land was granted to a priest from Madhyadeśa by another Pāla feudatory Bhojavarman, some time about the close of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th century A.D.⁴.

The Candras, possibly the feudatories of the Pālas in East Bengal, also made several grants. Śricandra allotted by one charter for religious purposes certain plots of land, scattered in five villages in Puṇḍra-wardhanabhukti⁵, where land continued to be scarce from the Gupta period onwards. His grandson Lāḍahacandra granted two villages along with 11 *pāṭakas* and several *droṇas* of land to the god Lāḍaha-mādhava, who was again granted 17 *pāṭakas* of land scattered in two places by Viradharadeva in the thirteenth century, probably in the Sylhet District⁶. Grant of villages on religious grounds continued under the Senas of Bengal, with the difference that in some cases the annual yield of the village was specified in kind and in cash. In one case Lakṣmaṇasena granted a village in North Bengal with detached plots in four villages⁷. Under Viśvarūpasena

1 *EI*, xxix, no. 7, ll. 24-42.

2 *JBAS*, lxix, pt. I, 66 ff., ll. 27-49.

3 *IB*, iii, no. 16, ll. 21-29.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24, ll. 24-51.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

6 The Mainamati copper-plate of Viradharadeva, formerly in the possession of Dr. A. H. Dani and now with the Pakistan Archaeological Survey.

7 *EI*, xxvi, no. 1, ll. 57-59.

11 plots of land scattered in 6 villages, altogether measuring $336\frac{1}{2}$ *unmānas* and yielding a total annual income of 500 *purāṇas*, were granted to a *brāhmaṇa*¹. The land charters of the 11th and 12th centuries create the impression that grants were mainly confined to what is now known as East Bengal where it was not possible to make grants on any lavish scale probably on account of scarcity of land.

Priests and temples in Bihar did not cease to receive generous gifts of villages, although so far we have not traced any copper-plates of the *Karṇāṭas* of Mithilā. However, we know of the grant of village made by *Samgrāma Gupta* some time in the 12th or the 13th century in south Monghyr. About the same time, in the early thirteenth century, the *Khayaravālas* of *Japla* in *Palamau* granted some villages and warned against the enjoyment of villages by the *brāhmaṇas* on the strength of forged charters². The *Khayaravālas* were the feudatories of the *Gāhaḍavālas*, who held western Bihar for some time and granted a village to a *brāhmaṇa* in the *Maner* area in 1134³.

In Uttar Pradesh, the heart of their kingdom, the *Gāhaḍavālas* made the largest number of grants. As shown earlier, a single *brāhmaṇa* family was granted landed property comprising at least eighteen villages, scattered in eighteen *pattalās*, the total number of the *pattalās* being sixty⁴, mainly for secular services. Similarly six fiefs were assigned to a *kṣatriya rāuta* (military functionary) and three villages to three other *rāutas*.⁵

1 *IB*, iii, no. 15, ll. 42-68.

2 One such forged charter has been discovered recently and is in the possession of Mr. S. V. Sohoni, Development Commissioner, Bihar.

3 *JBORS*, ii, 443-4, ll. 8-19.

4 Calculated on the basis of *Roma Niyogi, History of the Gāhaḍavāla Dynasty*, Appendix B, numbers 10-13, 15-17, 21, 23, 26, 37, 50, 52-56, 58.

5 *Supra*, pp. 173-4.

Besides these secular assignments many villages were granted by the Gāhaḍavālas for religious purposes. The largest number of such grants was made by Candradeva, who in 1093 granted one whole *pattalā*¹ to 500 brāhmaṇas. We have no idea of the size of this fiscal unit, but it may have comprised at least 100 villages. To the same group of 500 brāhmaṇas Candradeva in about 1100 granted 32 villages, 2 in the very same *pattalā* which had been previously granted with the exception of those two villages, and 30 in another *pattalā*. The motive for the grant of a whole *pattalā* to 500 brāhmaṇas does not seem to be their settlement in any backward area for its development, for the Kaṭhehalī *pattalā*, bounded on three sides by the rivers Gomatī, Bhāgirathī and Barnā², lay near Benares, which was one of the two important seats of Gāhaḍavāla power, the other being Kanauj. Probably it was part of a policy to placate the priests who formed an important element in the social order of Uttar Pradesh under the Gāhaḍavālas. In any case it is plain that about 130 villages were granted to 500 brāhmaṇas. Groups of villages continued to be granted to religious donees in subsequent times. Govindacandra regranted six villages to a new set of donees³, and Jayaccandra granted two villages⁴. Beside these, two or three villages were donated by the princes or queens of the Gāhaḍavāla family with the royal consent⁵. The available records indicate that the Gāhaḍavālas granted far more villages for religious purposes than for secular, but more relevant to our argument is the fact that, in addition to one whole *pattalā* probably consisting of 100 villages, another 110 villages⁶ were held by secular and

1 *El*, xiv, no. 15.

2 R. Niyogi, op. cit., p. 187.

3 *El*, xi, no. 3, l. 12.

4 *IA*, xviii, p. 131, l. 20.

5 P. Niyogi, *The Economic History of Northern India*, pp. 51-52.

6 Calculated on the basis of land grants of Section II Group A in Appendix B in Roma Niyogi, op. cit.

religious intermediaries as tax-free grants in an area which did not cover the whole of the modern Uttar Pradesh and hardly extended south of the Jamna.

The condition in the neighbouring kingdom of the Candellas, which comprised the area south of the Jamna formed by the Bundelkhand region, was not very different. Here most grants consisted of single villages, and 15 villages were granted separately to secular and religious beneficiaries by the Candella rulers¹. If we were to analyse the position only on the basis of these grants it would appear that secular assignees, mostly rewarded for military service, were as important as religious recipients. But this can be said only when we leave out of account a record of Paramardin. His Semra plates of 1167 grant to 309 brāhmaṇas villages scattered in 4 *viṣayas*². Since only 11 places are named, it appears that only 11 villages were granted. But if we carefully examine the names, it would appear that some of these stand for groups of villages. Thus the Pīlikhīnī-paṇcela, Itāva-paṇcela and Isarahāra-paṇcela together represent 15 and not 3 villages. Similarly Khaṭauda-dvādaśaka and Ṭaṇṭadvādaśaka together signify 24 and not 2 villages, and lastly Hāṭ-āṣṭādaśaka indicates 18 villages and not one. The other 5 place-names, however, stand for single villages. The total number of villages donated by this record of Paramardin would come to 62, which is not a high figure considering 309 beneficiaries to whom the villages were donated. The grant, however, excluded the town of Madanapura and two villages and 4 ploughs of land attached to the town, which again confirms our hypothesis that most place-names signified groups of villages rather than single villages. Besides this, we

1 Calculated on basis of the list of the Candella inscriptions containing the names of villages in S. K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajurāho*, Appendix I. We have, however, added the 15th village on the basis of the Tehri Plates of Trailokyavarman.

2 *EI*, iv, no. 20.

also bear of various other grants of plots of land to priests and others. What is more important is that this as well as other records mention the *bhattāgrahāras*, villages granted for religious and educational purposes, from where the brāhmaṇas emigrated to new areas. Even if we leave out such villages, the number of other villages granted by the Candellas would rise in all to nearly 80, which is not a negligible number in relation to the cultivable area (of 8000 sq. miles) in the Bundelkhand region.

The Caulukyas of Gujarāt also have many grants to their credit. Most epigraphic grants made to religious donees, priests and temples, both Jain and brāhmaṇical, consisted of single villages, although their total would reach well above two dozen¹. But the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, a semi-historical, literary account, records that in Vālāka-deśa, Siddharāja established Simhapura, an *agrahāra* of the brāhmaṇas, the jurisdiction of which extended over 106 villages. The Caulukyas built numerous temples, many of which had to be maintained out of the endowments of villages. Thus Kumārapāla built as many as 1440 Jain temples, probably one temple in every village². We have no idea of the number of villages with which these temples were endowed, but the Muslim historians provide astounding figures of the villages owned by the famous temple of Somnāth. It is stated that the temple had 10,000 cultivated villages under its direct control³. This may sound exaggerated, but the statement that "the different princes of Hindustan had bestowed in all two thousand villages" is not beside the mark. At any rate it is clear that no other single religious institution owned so many villages, Nālandā having only

1 *Id.*, vi, pp. 191 ; 193 ; 199 ; xviii, p. 108 ; xi, p. 337, etc.

2 A. K. Majumdar, *Ghaukukas of Gujarāt*, pp. 318-9. Siddharāja donated many villages under Simhapura. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

3 Elliot and Dawson, iv, 18.

200 villages, the highest number on record, if we exclude Somnāth.

The Caulukyas seem to have granted as many villages to vassals and officials as to religious donees. Even a unit of 126 villages seems to have been assigned to the king for his enjoyment as a member of the royal family¹. Vassals and high officers were enfeoffed with large territories, and in 1209 we hear of one whole *pattalā* granted to a high functionary, who seems to have received the whole of Saurāṣṭra-maṇḍala as fief from Bhīmadeva². The *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* informs us that Kumārapāla granted Āliga, the potter, Citrakūṭa *paṭṭikā* containing 700 villages³. This may be an exaggeration ; so also may be the tradition recorded in the *Rāsamālā* that a large number of northern brāhmaṇas (*audīcyas*) was invited by Mūlarāja to Gujarāt, where they were granted numerous villages, for the epigraphic evidence so far is not encouraging⁴. But the tradition that Mūlarāja presented to brāhmaṇas the beautiful and prosperous town of Simhapura and small villages to numerous brāhmaṇas near Siddhapura and Sihora⁵ cannot altogether be discarded. Brāhmaṇas were mainly brought from Kanauj and Ujjain to Gujarāt, where they became the founders or heads of the *maṭhas*⁶. In Gujarāt more grants were made to temples than to brāhmaṇas who acted as their priests or trustees⁷. On the whole epigraphic and literary records of land grants are sufficient indication of the considerable extent of land held

1 *EI*, i. no. 36, ll. 3-4. The term *svabhujiyamāna* used here may mean that the territory was directly enjoyed by the king.

2 *IA*, xviii, 113, ll. 19-23.

3 Merutuṅgācārya's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, ed. Jinavijaya Muni, p. 80.

4 H. D. Sankalia, *Archaeology of Gujarāt*, p. 208.

5 Forbes, *Rāsamālā*, pp. 64-5 quoted in Lakshmishankar Vyas, *Caulukya Kumārapāla* (in Hindi), p. 177.

6 Sankalia, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

7 *Ibid.*

by religious and especially by secular beneficiaries under the Caulukyas of Gujarāt.

We can also get some idea of the extent of the donated land in Baghelkhand, held by the various branches of the Kalacuris from the middle of the 10th to the end of the 12th century. Here villages were mostly granted to brāhmaṇas, presumably because of the need of having their support in maintaining control over a backward area. Most donations consisted of single villages¹. Thus a donee from Vaiśālī was granted a village by Karṇa (1041-73)². But one inscription records the grant of 5 villages by the king and members of the royal family to 8 brāhmaṇas, probably associated with the temple of Viṣṇu in a city³. An inscription of Yuvarājadeva II informs us that his favourite wife Nohālā granted 2 villages to a Śaiva ascetic and 7 to the god Śiva⁴. Another grant of his comprised probably 23, certainly 16, villages⁵. Land was also granted by the Saryupāra Gorakhpur branch of the Kalacuris, and the grant made by Soḍhadeva (1135) to 14 brāhmaṇas shows that the gift land measuring 20 *nālus* was situated in six villages⁶. The charters of the Kalacuris of Tripurī and Ratanpur and of their feudatories show that altogether 65 villages were granted by them for religious purpose, although the number does not seem to have been as great as under the Candellas. If, however, we place reliance upon a tradition recorded in an inscription, it would appear that a major part of the Kalacuri kingdom of Tripurī was given as a grant to a monastic establish-

1 *CHI*, iv, no. 63, ll. 19-25, verses 29-30.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 248, ll. 32-41.

3 *Ibid.*, no. 42, verses 30-42.

4 *Ibid.*, no. 45, verses 43-45.

5 *Ibid.*, no. 46, verses 36-42.

6 *Ibid.*, no. 74, verse 30, ll. 32-59. It has been recently argued that 6 place-names mentioned in the record may be taken as six quarters of the same village (P. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, p. 16), but these seem to refer to 6 villages.

ment. According to it *Sadbhāvaśambhu* of the *Golaki maṭha* received a gift of three lakhs of villages from the Kalacuri king *Yuvarāja I*. This would account for one-third of the total revenue of his home province of *Ḍāhala*, which, according to tradition, comprised nine lakhs of villages¹. This may not be literally true for the number of villages would not be as many as the tradition records, but without doubt the Kalacuris liberally patronised the *maṭhas*², especially the *Śaiva* ones, which emerged as intermediaries in land under the Kalacuris similarly to the Buddhist monasteries under *Harṣa* and the *Pālas*.

Mālwa, the western part of Central India held by the *Paramāras* in the 11th and 12th centuries, presented a somewhat different picture. Here the scions of the royal family, vassals, and officials seem to have occupied a considerable portion of land. We get the general impression that the major part of the donated land was managed by them, rather than by the priests and temples. In the outlying areas of the *Paramāra* kingdom a feudatory seems to have held as many as 1500 villages as reward for his services. The main reason which led to the division of *Mālwa* and the neighbouring areas into so many fiefs or personal estates was the tradition of equality among the members of the ruling clan who founded nearly half a dozen branches of the dynasty. Perhaps the major part of the *Paramāra* dominions was divided into fiefs. Villages granted for religious purposes seem to have been fewer and were mostly donated singly³. In addition to these, plots of land were also granted for this purpose⁴.

1 *Mirashi, CII*, iv, p. clviii.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *EL*, xix no. 39, Grant A ; *IA*, vi, pp. 52-53, ll. 7-24 ; *EL*, viii, no. 21, p. 206 ; ix, no. 13, B.

4 *EL*, xi, no. 18, ll. 7-18.

The inscriptions of the Cāhamānas illustrate more clearly the parcelling out of villages among the scions of the royal family. In their territories in Rājasthān the number of villages held by the temples¹ and brāhmaṇas seems to be limited and certainly less than those held by the kinsmen of the royal family, other vassals and officials, who of course made occasional grants of villages for religious purposes.

Land was also granted for religious purposes, sometimes as *agrahāras*, in the hill-state of Chambā in the latter half of the 10th century and in the 11th century². But here we do not hear of grants of villages; perhaps on account of the scarcity of arable land only plots of land were granted. Land grants were also enjoyed by secular assignees³, although it is difficult to get even a very rough indication of the extent of land held as gifts or fiefs.

Whether through the fact that more land charters have survived from this period or whether because of the rise of more dynasties, undoubtedly in the two centuries preceding the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate far more grants of villages in Northern India are recorded than during nearly three centuries of the Pāla and Pratihāra rule down to A. D. 1000. Numerous villages were granted in Uttar Pradesh and Central India, which never witnessed so many gifts of villages under the Pratihāras. Indeed, during the 11th and 12th centuries the practice of making land grants became almost universal throughout the whole of Northern India. The records of Mālwa, Gujarāt and Rājasthān give the impression that the major portion of land in these areas was held as fiefs by kinsmen, vassals and officials, who were probably assigned more villages than priests

1 'A Copper-plate Grant of Alhana's reign V. 1205', Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, pp. 181-2, ll. 13-14.

2 *ASR*, 1902-3, pp. 252-3, ll. 11-25; pp. 260-1, ll. 15-32.

3 *Ibid.*

and temples. But in Uttara Pradesh and Central India more villages were held by priests than by secular assignees. The data from Bihar, Bengal and Assam are too slender to hazard any generalisation, although it is fair to assume that monastic establishments of the type of Nālandā, which had been granted 200 villages, continued to flourish till the advent of the Muslim conquerors is this area.

A statistical account of the villages held in religious grants or secular assignments is impossible; it is not possible even in the case of European countries which are more fortunate in the possession of records. In Northern India even if all gift villages mentioned in inscriptions are totalled up, it will not be possible to determine their ratio to the total number of villages, for the total number is not known. Nevertheless the land charters of the period provide unmistakable evidence of the widespread practice of religious and secular grants of villages, for which several officers known as *mahāsāndhi-vigrahika*, *mahākṣapaṭalika* and *dharmalekhi* were especially maintained in various kingdoms of Northern India. All this meant an increase in the number of intermediaries of different grades in land, which may be regarded as a significant feature of the economy of the period.

An important practice under the Pālas and Pratīhāras¹ which enabled the beneficiaries to increase their personal demesne but at the same time to extend the cultivable area at the cost of forest or barren land surrounding the donated village was to leave the boundaries of the gift villages undefined. So far as Eastern Bihar and Bengal are concerned it seems that the practice continued in the 11th and 12th centuries under Mahīpāla I (988-1038)², Vigrahapāla III³ and Madanapāla

1 Some Pāla and Rāṣṭrakūṭa charters, however, clearly demarcate the donated villages by mentioning their surroundings.

2 *EI*, xxix, no. I, B, l. 41. This charter known as the Belwa copper-plate was, however, issued in about A. D. 993.

3 *Ibid.*, no. 7, l. 32.

(1140-55)¹. The charters of these rulers grant the villages with their boundaries up to their pasture grounds and shrubs². The custom of not specifying the boundaries was also followed by the Varmans³ and some other feudatories⁴ of the Pālas in East Bengal. Even much later the practice was continued by the Sena chiefs of Piṭhi near Gaya⁵ and by Saṃgrāma Gupta, a ruler in south Monghyr some time in the late twelfth or thirteenth century⁶. Although the term used in his charter was the four boundaries defined, (*catuḥ-sīm-āvacchinah*)⁷ actually these were not stated.

But the Senas, who supplanted the Varmans in East Bengal and occupied a major part of the Pāla kingdom in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, always took care to define the boundaries of villages and plots of land granted by them⁸. The same practice was followed by the Candras, probably the contemporaries of the Senas in East Bengal. The Mainamati copper-plates of Lāḍahacandra clearly specify the limits of the villages granted⁹. The fact that boundaries were defined and the areas and income specified would suggest that the progressive possibility of grants in opening new land to cultivation was exhausted. But this could hardly apply to contemporary Assam, where the limits of the plots of land and the yields from them were clearly mentioned¹⁰. Perhaps

1 *JBAS*, lxix, pt. I. 66 ff., l. 39.

2 Sometimes the term *yūti* is replaced by *pūti*.

3 *IB*, iii, pp. 23-24, ll. 37-41.

4 *JBORS*, iv, 280, verses 2-3.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7, ll. 21-32.

6 *JBORS*, v, 593-4, l. 10.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *IB*, iii, p. 78, ll. 37-54 ; pp. 114-5, ll. 39-51 ; pp. 129-31, ll. 46-50.

9 Copper-plate 1, ll. 6-11, plate 2, ll. 8-11. The copper-plate is with the Pakistan Archaeological Survey.

10 *JBAS*, lxvi, pt. 1, pp. 295-7 ; *ibid.*, lxvii, pt. 1, p. 120 ; *ibid.*, lxvi, pt. 1, pp. 130-1.

limits were specified in Assam because not villages but plots of land were given in donation. Whatever might be the reason the specification of boundaries circumscribed the area to which the donees could extend his jurisdiction.

In contrast to East Bengal under the Candras and Senas, the villages granted by the Gāhaḍavālas and their feudatories in Uttara Pradesh generally did not have their boundaries defined¹. The usual phrase used in this connection was "the village up to its boundaries", defined as to its four abuttals (*catur-āghāṭa-viśuddhaḥ*)². But actually only the Basāhi grant of Govindacandra defines the boundaries on all sides of a village given in grant³. Since most Gāhaḍavāla land grants seem to have been made in developed areas, it is strange that the boundaries are not mentioned; perhaps these were taken for granted. But even then lack of specification may have given the beneficiary a free hand in extending his personal property. But in the Kalacuri dominion of Baghelkhand the village granted was never defined. Of 65 villages recorded as grants in the charters of the Kalacuris of Tripurī and Ratanpur and their feudatories⁴, none has its boundaries demarcated. Many gift villages are just named and no details whatsoever furnished, particularly in the grants made by the feudatories. All this seems to be understandable in view of the emigration of the brāhmaṇas

1 *IA*, xviii, 11, 16, 131, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 143.

2 *Ibid*.

3 *IA*, xiv, 103.

4 *CH*, iv, no. 42, verses 30-42, no. 45, verses 43-45; no. 46, verses 35-42; no. 48, ll. 36-40; no. 50, ll. 38-48; no. 56, l. 28; no. 60, verses 29-30; no. 63, l. 27; no. 65, ll. 11-12; no. 68, ll. 7-10; no. 70, l. 13; no. 75, ll. 8-11; no. 77, verse 33; no. 82, ll. 18-20; no. 83, verse 20; no. 86, verse 16; no. 88, verse 23; no. 89, verse 16; no. 91, verses 15-16; no. 94, verse 15; no. 96, verse 39; no. 97, verse 13; no. 98, verse 42; no. 99, verse 18; no. 101, verse 19; no. 102, verse 19; no. 117, ll. 8-10; no. 123, verse 15; *CH*, iv, 652.

from outside¹, mainly from Uttar Pradesh, to Central India, which may have helped the growth of agriculture through the introduction of new methods but hindered the development of the proprietary rights of the peasants in the donated villages.

What prevailed in the eastern part of Central India also obtained in its western part in Mālwa, where the grants of the Paramāras generally do not mention the boundaries of the villages given. In one case it is stated that the village extended up to a kos², but in other cases even this is not stated³. However they use the phrase *sva-sīmā-tṛṇa-yūti-gocara-paryanta* (extending up to its boundaries, grassy land and pasture grounds), which is so common in Pāla and other land charters. It seems that in Mālwa there was still some scope for bringing virgin land under cultivation, because brāhmaṇas from a large number of places outside Mālwa were invited to settle in the land⁴. But it is likely that many of these were brought rather to lend support to the Paramāras than to bring virgin soil under cultivation.

Many Candella grants also do not define the boundaries of the villages given. This is specially true of grants made before the twelfth century⁵, although some later grants retain this form⁶. The usual phrase used in the Candella grants is the same as in those of the Gāhaḍa-vālas, namely "the boundaries defined up to its (of the village) four abuttals". A charter of Parmardin (1167) refers to the grant of probably 62 and certainly 11

1 Mirashi *CII*, iv, p. cixvi.

2 *IA*, vi, pp. 52-3, ll. 7-24.

3 *Ibid*, xiv, p. 160, ll. 9-17; *Proceedings of (later All-India) Oriental Conference*, i, 325-6.

4 D. C. Ganguly, *History of the Paramāra Dynasty*, p. 240.

5 *IA*, xvi, 204, ll. 6-11; *ibid.*, 206-7, ll. 6-15.

6 *EI*, xvi, no. 20, I, ll. 7-14; *IA*, xvi, pp. 209-10, ll. 5-7, 15-17; *EI*, xxxii, 119-20; xxxi, no. 11, ll. 12-18.

villages, but does not specify their boundaries¹. The boundaries and the yield are, however, mentioned in the grant of a plot of land made by Madanavarman in 1134². The boundaries and measurements of the donated land are also provided by the Mahoba plate of Paramardin 1173. Thus it would appear that the Candellas preferred to define the boundaries if the object of grant was a plot of land but did not do so if it was a village. By and large the Candella grants opened up avenues for the expansion of the donees in the neighbourhood of the donated villages.

The conditions seem to have been entirely different in Gujarāt, where the Caulukyas ruled. Perhaps the practice of not defining the boundaries of the village given in grant was followed in the last quarter of the 10th century in the reign of Mūlarāja³. The limits of a village granted by a Cāhamāna feudatory of Ajayapāla in 1175 for feeding 50 brāhmaṇas were not defined⁴. But the boundaries of a village granted by Bhimadeva I⁵, and of plots of land granted by Bhimadeva II⁶ and by some subordinate authority under him were demarcated⁷. Most of these grants, however, belong to the 13th century. Thus we get the impression that in Gujarāt, in the late 12th and in the 13th centuries, boundaries of the gift villages were recorded, a practice which seems to be in keeping with the developed economy of that region. But generally the grants of the 11th and 12th centuries show that the boundaries of the villages were left undefined so that the donees could take

1 *EI*, iv, no. 20, ll. 6-17.

2 *IA*, xvi, pp. 209-10, ll. 5-7.

3 *IA*, vi, pp. 192-3, pl. I, ll. 6-11.

4 *IA*, xviii, p. 83, ll. 18-21.

5 Bhadresvar inscription of Bhimadeva I, ll. 3-5, on the basis of a copy deciphered by Dr. J. de Casparis of the School of Oriental and African studies, London, who kindly passed it on to me.

6 *IA*, xviii, p. 110, ll. 7-12.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 113, ll. 26-42.

advantage of the confusion to add to their landed property by appropriating the neighbouring land.

The land grants of the 11th and 12th centuries further helped the appropriation of land and its resources by individual donees. Some early Pāla charters sought the formal consent of the vassals, officials and the village community in making grants of villages. But even this formality was given up in later Pāla charters. Instead of giving their consent they were now just informed¹, although the old form was followed in the charters of the Candras of East Bengal² and in a 13th century copper-plate from south Monghyr³. The princes of Uttar Pradesh, Central India, and Gujarāt, however, never cared to pay even formal attention to the wishes of the villagers, whose headmen and leading inhabitants, and occasionally whose cultivators, were informed of the grant, but never asked to give their formal consent to it. This gives us some indication of the weakening of the rights of the village population over the resources belonging to the village.

In transferring agrarian rights to the beneficiaries the land charters of the period follow the pattern set by the Pāla and Pratihāra land grants; but they enlarge the scope of the concessions, practically embracing all the resources belonging to the village. Of course pasture ground, grassy land beyond it, mango and *mahuā* trees, reservoirs of water, bushes and thickets, forests, barren land, low land, fertile land, land under occasional flood, etc., all continued to be transferred to the donee as in earlier times. But some new items, differing according to the geography of the area, were added. Thus the charters from East Bengal almost invariably donated

1 The phrase used was *viditam-astu* in place of *matam-astu*, *EI*, xxix, no. 7, l. 31; *JBAS*, lxix, pt. I, p. 66 ff., l. 39.

2 Two Mainamati copper-plates of Lādahacandradeva formerly in possession of Dr. A. H. Dani, and now with the Pakistan Archaeological Survey.

3 *JBORS* v, 593-4, l. 9.

betelnut and cocoanut¹, rarely mentioned in earlier charters; trees must have now constituted an important source of income in cash to those who grew them. Further, sometimes the village was now transferred along with salt (*sa-lavaṇa*)², mentioned as salt mine (*sa-loha-lavaṇ-ākaraḥ*) in some grants from Bihar³ and Uttar Pradesh⁴ and Baghelkhand. How the surrender of these resources to the recipients affected the villagers in East Bengal cannot be said, but it indicates the more complete control of the beneficiaries over the varied produces of the village.

Curiously enough the grants from Bengal do not transfer fishing rights unless they are covered by the donee's rights to tanks and other reservoirs of water. Was this a concession to the universal taste of the people of that area for eating fish? But the Gāhaḍavāla grants specifically transfer the government rights to fisheries (*matsy-ākaraḥ*)⁵. It is obvious that unlike the transfer of iron and salt mines⁶, which would not be found in every village, that of rights to fisheries would affect the inhabitants of many villages, who were not free to carry on fishing because of the presence of the grantees.

The Candella charters present the most elaborate list of the village and its products made over to the donees. In addition to various kinds of trees and mines they mention the transfer of *kusuma* (flowers producing saffron), sugarcane, cotton and *saṇa* (hemp) plants⁷. Some lists mention even animals such as deer, and birds and aquatic animals⁸, which would naturally affect the villagers' rights to hunt and fish freely. Similarly

1 *IB*, iii, pp. 23-24, ll. 37-41; pp. 114-5, ll. 39-51; pp. 129-31, ll. 50-53.

2 *IB*, iii, pp. 23-4, ll. 37-41.

3 *JBORS*, v, 593-4, ll. 10-11.

4 *EI*, ix, no. 47, ll. 7-14.

5 *JBORS*, ii, 443-9, l. 14.

6 *Ibid*.

7 *EI*, xx, no. 14, ll. 17-20.

8 *EI*, xvi, no. 2, l. 26.

in some Sena grants, and generally in the Candella charters¹, temples were also transferred to the recipients. Such temples may have been constructed by the communal efforts of the villagers who undoubtedly used them for communal purposes, but once allotted to the donees the threat to the communal use of the temple could not be ignored. Especially the brāhmaṇa donees would find it difficult to resist the temptation to monopolise the offerings and endowments made to the deities.

The various kinds of resources made over to the donees included mines and deposits. These obviously were claimed by the king on account of his sovereign rights, but such rights could not be as effective under the royal agents as under the donees, who would have the advantage of being on the spot. The transfer of hills, rivers, forests, etc., would have the effect of creating individual rights of the donees in the all conceivable resources of the soil. Commercial crops were taxed in the Candella dominions, and irrigation facilities may have brought taxes in the Paramāra kingdom where the grant of ponds, wells and lakes (*vāpī-kūpa-taḍāga*) along with the village points to this possibility. Irrigation cess was as old as the days of Kauṭilya, but now it seems to have been transferred to the donees. The gift of hills, salt and iron, may have been inserted in several charters as a matter of form, for these surely did not exist in every donated village or piece of land. But where the gift land contained these appendages, the donee's rights may have been effective. This would imply that those who quarried stone out of the hill or dug earth for building from the common land had to pay something. What else could be the reason for explicitly mentioning the alienation of these assets in favour of the grantees?

No ruler had set up any inspectorate to see that the

1 Ibid., I, 25 (the term used is *sa-mandira-prakāra*),

donees did not exceed the economic rights and privileges conceded to them, with the result that peasants were completely thrown at the mercy of the donees, secular or religious. Perhaps they fared worse under secular grantees, who had to meet certain obligations out of the villages granted to them. But in every case the peasant was not so much of a free, sturdy peasant-proprietor as a semi-serf ministering to the needs of the grantees.

As shown earlier, the detailed enumeration of the resources of a donated village implies not merely the right to enjoy income from them but also the right to own them. It has been argued that the Kalacuri grants transferred to the donees¹ not the rights of ownership but only the royal prerogative of demanding land revenue and other dues in kind and cash. This may be true of those grants which only mention the name of the village and its revenues, but not of those which catalogue its resources with meticulous care. A shorter list of village resources is generally furnished by the Paramāra grants², which mention the pasture ground and the grassy land beyond it, and by the Caulukya land grants which mention only the rows of trees³; the Cāhamāna grants provide the shortest list, for they merely name the village to be granted⁴. Hence in Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt the grantees were not given complete rights in the ground. But this cannot be said in general of the grants made by the Gāhaḍavālas and particularly the Candellas.

It has been further held that the transfer of the village resources did not affect the rights of the village folk, who continued to use the water reservoirs, tanks, common

1 Mirashi, *CII*, iv, p. clxxi.

2 *IA*, xiv, p. 160, l. 13.

3 *Ibid.*, xviii, p. 83, l. 19.

4 *EI*, ii, no. 8, verses 48-49; "A copper-plate grant of Alhana's reign" in Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, p. 182.

pasture, etc., in common¹. But once these rights were made over to the beneficiaries it is difficult to see how long they would respect the customary rights of the village folk. As pointed out earlier, the constant presence of the donees in the village would certainly tend to undermine the common rights of the villagers than would the occasional visit of the royal agents.

Subinfeudation, in its broad² general sense of beneficiaries themselves making land grants, not only continued but also increased during this period. It has been shown elsewhere how members of the ruling clan, vassals and officials made grants out of their own assignments to priests and temples, sometimes with and sometimes without the permission of the king³, and here sometimes they prevailed upon their sovereign to endow the temples erected by them with villages. Occasionally they also used their power and prestige to persuade the local merchants to patronise the shrines set up by themselves. It is true that religious grants did not involve any economic obligations towards the donees who certainly could claim the good wishes and moral support of the beneficiaries, but they did give rise to several grades of rights in the soil, the assignee owing it to the royal favour, the religious beneficiary owing it to the assignee's favour, and the peasant owing it to the favour of both. Even where such wide powers were not conceded, as in the case of the Kalacuris, religious bodies (*mathas*) and groups of brāhmaṇas owning as many as 23 villages could not manage them without employing intermediaries who had to be paid by means of land grants or grants of revenues.

This brings us to the question of service grants, the

1 Mirashi, *CII*, iv, pp. clxxi-ii.

2 *EI*, ii, no. 8, verses 49.

3 Ibid. Some instances of grants made by *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta* and similar dignitaries have been collected by P. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-56.

paying of even minor services by grants of land. The practice was as old as Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, which provides for the granting of land to various village functionaries in new settlements. Widely prevalent in feudal Europe, the practice seems to have been also current in certain parts of Northern India. Thus in Orissa under the Gaṅgas coppersmiths, braziers, and betel-sellers were attached to the temple as a part of the grant, and at least some of them were assigned plots of land for their maintenance¹. Although no epigraphic instances are found in Bengal, Bihar, U. P. and Central India, the practice seems to have been well-established in the hill-state of Chambā, where an eleventh century grant, shows that various plots of land, previously granted to the cook, the local elders (*goṣṭhika*), the watchmen (*aṣṭaprahārikas*) and some minor officials, apparently for their services, were made over to the temple². A certain portion of this land was expressly earmarked for the service of the watchmen (*aṣṭaprahārikas*) in that temple³. Such plots were stipendiary tenements given to temple-servants. If this practice was followed in paying temple services, there could hardly be another practice followed in the payment of minor services rendered to the king and smaller *raṅkilas* (feudal lords).

Some examples of the prevalence of this practice are found in Rajasthān. The earliest evidence comes from a land grant of 813 made to two temples in Udaipur⁴. It speaks of some fields granted by Vaidya Giyaka of a kāyastha family, whose members seem to have served a Guhilot chief as scribes and physicians⁵, in consideration of which probably they had received some land. The practice also obtained under the Cāhamānas of Nadol, as

1 *JASB*, lxxv, pt. I, pp. 254-6, ll. I-21.

2 *ASR*, 1902-03, pp. 262-4, ll. 11-32.

3 *Ibid.*, ll. 28-31.

4 *EI*, xx, p. 123.

5 *Ibid.*

can be inferred from an inscription of 1141¹. According to this 16 brāhmaṇas, two from each of the 8 wards into which the town of Dhālepa was divided, were held responsible for the maintenance of security in the town². If they did not help in tracing out thieves and yet asked for means of subsistence they were to be punished³. Apparently the brāhmaṇas were maintained by means of land grants for which they had to render secular services.

Some indication of service grants is also given by a Caulukya inscription from Gujarāt. A subordinate functionary, probably a bania, under Bhīmadeva II, constructed an irrigation-well and a watering trough attached to it, and for their upkeep he granted certain plots of land to a man of the Prāgvata clan, probably a merchant⁴. It is fair to assume that other similar grants may have been made in Gujarāt. We have no idea of the extent of subinfeudation caused by such service grants, but wherever they prevailed they must have depressed the position of the peasants.

A few epigraphic records of the earlier period mention the transfer of peasants and artisans along with the donated piece of land or village. But by the beginning of the 11th century, when the *Agni Purāṇa*⁵ was finally compiled, it seems to have been a well-established practice. For this *Purāṇa* recommends that villages with agricultural peasants (*khetaka*) should be transferred to the brahmanas⁶. It also advises that temples and *maṭhas* should be provided with lands and slaves⁷ and given facilities for dance and music, which would imply the gift

1 *EI*, xi, no. 4, ix.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

4 *IA*, xviii, p. 113, ll. 25-45.

5 The date has been assigned to this text by B. B. Misra in Ch. II of his Ph. D. Thesis on Polity in the *Agni Purāṇa* approved by the Patna University in 1963.

6 211, 34 ; 213, 9.

7 211, 72 ; 222, 13-14.

of dancers and musicians. More references of the type occur in the records of this period. Thus the land grants of Assam transfer houses¹, which clearly imply the transfer of peasants attached to the plots of land. A typical illustration is a mid-11th century grant from the Sylhet District, according to which the god Śiva received from King Govinda-Keśavadeva 375 *halas* of land with 296 houses, scattered in different villages². The householders so transferred included not only peasants but also cowherds and craftsmen. The god was also endowed with many attendants such as bell-metal workers, washermen, boatmen and shopkeepers, who inhabited the soil made over to him³.

Epigraphic records from Bengal do not refer to the transfer of peasants to the donees down to the end of the 12th century. But later the practice spread to this part of the country as well. The Sena grants mention the names of peasants cultivating the plots granted for religious purpose. The copper-plates from the Tippera District, of about 1234, mention the gift of 12 houses in a village granted to 20 brāhmaṇas⁴. The term *gṛha-ṭi* used in this connection has been interpreted variously⁵. In our opinion *ṭi* stands for *ṭilā*, still used in Bengal and Bihar for natural or artificial elevations made of earth. In East Bengal, where the grant was made, the cultivating caste of Kaivarttas and others still live in houses built on raised platforms, with the object of checking the entry of water. The transfer of 12 houses therefore suggests the making over of peasants or agricultural labourers along with the ground on which they worked. Several examples are found in the earlier

1 *JASB*, lxi, pt. I, pp. 295-6 ; cf. *JASB*, ix (1840), 766f, verse 24.

2 *EI*, xiv, no. 49, ll. 29-51.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *EI*, xxx, no. 10 (Mehār Plates of Dāmodaradeva), ll. 17-32, and pp. 57-58.

5 *Ibid.*, xxvii, 188, fn. 6 ; xxx, 56.

period in Orissa; where for about a hundred years from the middle of the 9th century weavers, brewers cow-herds and other villagers covered by the term *prakṛti* were made over to the donees¹. In our period the practice seems to have been widespread in the Candella dominions in Bundelkhand. Here peasants, artisans and traders were specifically transferred to the donees along with the village². The custom also prevailed on a considerable scale in the Cāhamāna dominions, though in a slightly different form. According to the charter of Prince Sāhaṇapāladeva of Naḍol in 1135 Sohiya and Asāra, living in the village Nandāna, were transferred to the god Tripuruṣadeva, along with their sons, grandsons, etc., in perpetuity³. To the same god were surrendered by King Āhaṇadeva in 1148 two other peasants of the same village, Umaponāṇāla and Maḥaṣasīha⁴. It is not clear whether in the two cases the village in question was also granted to the god. But the persons who were allotted to the god were certainly peasants (*kuṭumbikas*)⁵, and the object for which they were transferred could have been no other than the cultivation of land belonging to the god. They have been therefore compared to Russian serfs⁶. A Caulukya grant of 1207 informs us that the Mehar king Jagamalla, a feudatory of the Caulukyas, donated to two liṅgas, established by him in the large town of Talājhā, two pieces of land in the neighbouring two villages, and for their cultivation he named three

1 See Appendix I.

2 *sa-kāru-karṣaka-vaṇig-vāstavyam*, *EI*, xx, no. 14, B plates, l. 19. The editor of this inscription, Hiralal, reads *karṣaka* as *kapaṅka*, and wrongly translates the phrase as "together with potter's mud and what has been left by merchants", *ibid.*, 131 fn. I; also see *EI*, xxxii, no. 14, charter I, l. 31.

3 Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, Appendix G, iii, ll. 20-21.

4 *Ibid.*, ll. 22-23.

5 *Ibid.*, ll. 20-22.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 299.

peasants in the grant¹. The only other area where this type of serfdom is attested was Chambā, where cultivators given away along with plots of land are named in a grant².

Although the present survey leaves Peninsular India out of account, it seems that the practice was not absent in Mahārāṣṭra. A Yādava record of 1279 informs that an *agrahāra* was granted along with artisans, etc.³ The term *kārukādi*⁴ obviously covered peasants. In Koṅkaṇ artisans were objects of religious donations. The Khārepāṭaṇ plates of the *māṇḍalika* Raṭṭarāja issued in 1008 allotted to the teachers of the Mattamayūra line not only three villages but also families of female attendants, a family of oilmen, a family of gardeners, a family of potters, and a family of washermen.⁵ Obviously the services of these attendants and craftsmen were thought indispensable to the ascetics and the others attached to them. Though limited to artisans it is a clear instance of serfdom.

Later grants from Orissa show the extension of serfdom from the rural to the urban area. Thus the second grant in the Nagari plates of Anaṅgabhīma III, issued in 1230, shows that a township was granted to a brāhmaṇa along with its residents (*pura-jana-sameta*).⁶ The town contained four houses resembling royal residences, but what is more important it contained 30 other houses inhabited by shopkeepers, perfumers, dealers in conchshells, sawyers, goldsmiths, braziers, all of whom are named in the grant.⁷ The grant also transferred betel-sellers, garland makers, dealers in sugar, milkmen,

1 *IA*, xi, 337-40.

2 *ASR*, 1902-3, pp. 252-3, ll. 16-25.

3 M. G. Dikshit (ed.), *Selected Inscriptions from Maharashtra*, p. 99.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *EI*, iii, no. 40, ll. 58-59.

6 *EI*, xxviii, no. 40, ll. 127-9.

7 *Ibid.*, ll. 127-31.



weavers, oilmen, potters, and Kaivarttas, who all again are named therein.¹ Further, a barber, some craftsmen and washermen were also made over. This therefore is a striking indication of the projection of the stagnant rural economy into the towns. It shows how small traders and artisans had no option but to remain yoked to the closed economy of the town irrespective of its owner. They did not enjoy mobility even in towns where they had to work under the same conditions as peasants on donated lands in villages.

The nature of mediaeval economy left little scope for the mobility of artisans, and even less that of peasants. Even in villages whose peasants and artisans were not specifically transferred probably the beneficiary enjoyed a general control over the villagers who were expressly asked to carry out his orders and to pay him all dues. Apparently the grants implied the transfer of the people living in the villages. In that case why did some charters specifically mention the transfer of artisans and peasants? In the outlying areas of Assam, Orissa and Chambā the position can be explained as due to the fact that extra caution and coercion had to be exercised in running the local economy of these backward areas which did not attract settlers from outside. In Bundelkhand also it was necessary to follow the same policy in its backward regions. The obvious object of such a policy was to retain the service of artisans and peasants, and sometimes even of merchants, in those areas where the supply of labour was scarce and land for settlement abundant. But this could not be done without introducing full-fledged serfdom in the donated areas.

From what has been stated above it will appear that some of the well-known feudal usages such as subinfeudation and service tenures existed in the donated

1 Ibid., II. 132-34.

2 Ibid., I. 134.

villages and worsened the position of the peasants. Even in the area under direct royal control their position was not much better.) The enumeration of taxes in the Gāhaḍavāla charters¹ shows that peasants in U. P. had to pay far more numerous taxes under the Gāhaḍavālas than under any other previous dynasty. The Gāhaḍavāla records mention as many as 11 taxes levied from the villagers. If all these taxes were realised one wonders what proportion of the produce was left with the peasant to support his family. An inscription of the Kalacuris of Tripurī dated 1167 enumerates as many as 11 taxes in addition to certain other unspecified taxes levied or to be levied². The same number of taxes is catalogued in a Kalacuri grant of 1180-1³, which certainly included the usual *bhāga* and *bhoga*, for before the term *pravaṇi* six syllables in the inscription are completely effaced⁴. This would raise the number of taxes to 13. Although the Kalacuri grants, generally specifically mention three or four taxes, (*bhāga-bhoga-hiraṇy-ādi-samasta-rāja-praty-ādyah*)⁵, the use of the last term 'all royal dues' seems to cover other taxes which are not specified. The utmost we can say is that all these taxes may not have been imposed on the same person, traders and craftsmen paying taxes different from those paid by the peasants. In all likelihood that peasants would be subjected to most taxes enumerated above. Whether the donee could impose fresh taxes on the villagers placed under his charge is not quite clear although the taxes to be imposed on the

1 All these taxes have been listed in Roma Niyogi, *History of the Gāhaḍavālas*, pp. 167-90, but some terms used for taxes are still inexplicable.

2 *CII*, iv, no. 63, ll. 29-30. Some terms are obscure, but the list of taxes is formidable: *bhāga-kara-pravaṇi-vāḍa - carī - rasavati - kāmata-viṣeṇimādāya-paṭṭakilādāya-duḥsādhyādāya-(vai)ṣayikādāy-ādi-kṛta-kariṣymāṇ-ādāyah saha*.

3 *Ibid.*, Appendix, no. 4.

4 *Ibid.*, 649, fn. 14.

5 *CII*, iv, no. 50, ll. 43-44.

villages in future (*kariṣyamāṇa*) were sometimes transferred to him. In such villages the peasants were always faced with the possibility of increase in taxes at the hands of the rulers who obviously did not feel circumscribed by custom.

(A factor which added to the burden of the peasants in Eastern India during this period was the specification of the yield from the various plots of land payable to the state.) The earlier system was based on the principle of sharecropping, according to which a part of the produce of the peasants went to the government. (As feudalism developed not only the state shared crops with the tenants, but also the tenants shared crops with the sub-tenants, giving rise to a hierarchy of sharecropping.) But as the system of measurement spread widely and the yield came to be fixed meticulously, the interests of the peasants suffered. For measurement and stipulation of the quantity of the produce did not take into account natural calamities, which were almost beyond human control in earlier times. The new assessment assured more surplus to the state than the sharecropping system. Perhaps the state made remissions in abnormal circumstances, but we do not know whether the grantees could afford to be generous.

In the Kalacuri, Candella and Cāhamāna dominions the peasants must have suffered a great deal on account of the contributions they had to make for the fees and maintenance of royal officials of all ranks. Under the Kalacuris sometimes four officials called *viṣeṇim* (whatever functionary the term might indicate), *paṭṭakila*, *duḥṣādhyā* and *vaiṣayika* were authorised to obtain their maintenance fee (*ādāya*) from the peasants¹. The number of such officials seem to be greater in the Candella records, which empower the forest-officials (*aṭavika*), irregular soldiers (*cāṭas*)² and royal officials in general to receive

1 *CH*, iv, no. 63, ll. 29-30.

2 *EL*, xxxii, no. 14, Charter I, l. 33.

their respective dues (*svam-svam-ābhāvyam*)¹. However, under the Cāhamānas the practice seems to have been limited to the royal officers *pratihāra* and *balādhīpa*. It is not quite clear whether the dues known as *ādāya* and *ābhāvyā* were perquisites paid to the royal officials in addition to their remuneration. In earlier times similar dues were collected only for the maintenance of the royal family as can be inferred from the grants of Harṣa and early Pāla kings, a feature which continued in the East Bengal of our period under the name *rājakul-ābhāvyā*². Probably these dues in early times were realised by the officials appointed by the royal families. Now not only did such contributions increase in number, but, what is more serious, they probably came to be realised by the officials for whom they were meant. This was bound to prove oppressive to the peasants, whose exploitation in this manner was a peculiar feature of Indian feudalism.

(The process of feudalisation of crafts and commerce in the sense that state income from these sources was granted to temples was carried forward in Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt during this period. The Cāhamāna records furnish several illustrations. A record of 1161 of Alhaṇadeva grants a monthly amount of 5 dramma from the custom-house in the grounds of Naḍḍūla to a Jain temple³.) Another grant from the custom-house of Naḍḍūla at the rate of 6 dramma (it is not clear whether monthly or yearly) was made to the god Tripuruṣa in 1114⁴. We again learn that Alhaṇa granted in perpetuity 4 dramma per month from the custom-house for the

1 Ibid., Charter 2, l. 16.

2 *IB*, iii, 156-7, ll. 31-32.

3 *EI*, ix, p. 63 with fn. 8.

4 Dasharatha Sharma, op. cit., Appendix G, iii, ll. 18-19. Since some words are missing the sense is not quite clear, but there is no doubt that some grant was made by the king from the custom-house for religious purpose.

daily offerings to an image of Gauri installed by the Queen Śaṅkaradevī¹. A copper-plate of 1156 refers to the grant of a *rūpaka* per day to be paid out of the collection at the toll-house (*maṇḍapikā*) to some Jain temples by a feudatory of Kumārapāla². A record of 973 shows that one high dignitary at Śākambharī granted one *viṃśopaka* on every *kūṭaka* of salt, and another granted to the same god one dramma on the sale of every horse³. These cases amply demonstrate that a part of the income in cash derived from the state levy on the sale of various goods was granted to Jain and brāhmaṇical temples. Furthermore, under the Cāhamānas state levies on flourishing crafts were also donated for religious purpose. A record of 1132 informs us that two Cāhamāna princes together with their mother ordered 2 *pallikās* out of those due to the royal family from each oil-mill (*ghāṇaka*) to be given to the Jain saints in and outside Nādulaḍāgikā (Nādlāi)⁴. Income in cash from such levies may also have been made over to brāhmaṇas. Records of this nature are also found in smaller kingdoms. Thus an inscription dated 955 of the Śurasenas from Bayana in the former Bharatpur state speaks of the collection of three drammās for a deity at one *maṇḍapikā* and the same amount at another⁵. Similarly the *praśastis* of Baijnāth inform us that a local chief granted daily two drammās out of his income from the *maṇḍapikā*⁶.

(Feudalisation of trade and industry also went on apace in the Paramāra territory. Yaśovarman, a feudatory of the Paramāras in the Nāsik District in the second half of the 11th century, confirmed the grant to a Jain temple of not only several plots of land but also of 2 oil-mills, 14

1 Ibid., iv, plate 2, ll. 15-17.

2 *IA*, xli, p. 203.

3 *EI*, ii, no. 8, verses 48-49.

4 *EI*, xi, no. 4, ll. 1-9.

5 *EI*, xxii, p. 120 ff.

6 Ibid., i, p. 97 ff.

shops of merchants and 14 drammas in cash¹). An inscription of Cāmuṇḍarāja dated 1080 found at Arthūnā, 28 miles of west of Bānswārā in Rājasthān, taken to be one of the two capitals of the Paramāras, contains more detailed information. It notifies grants both in cash and kind, profession-wise as well as commodity-wise. Every house of the traders in the local bazaar is asked to contribute a dramma on the Caitra festival; on the shops of the braziers is imposed a dramma per month (presumably per shop), and distillers are asked to pay 4 *rūpakas*². As regards commodities one *varṇikā* is levied on every *bharaka* of candied sugar and jaggery, on *rūpaka* on each *bharaka* of Bengal madder, thread and cotton, one and a half *rūpakas* on each *koṭika* of clothing fabric, and one *mānaka* on each *muṭaka* of salt³. Besides these dues to be paid in cash by the sellers of commodities in the bazaar, certain dues are levied in kind. Thus one nut is prescribed on every *bharaka* of cocoanuts, one from every thousand areca-nuts, one *palikā* on every jar of butter and sesamum oil, and one small bunch on every large bundle of flowers⁴. Some other levies in cash and kind made on oil, grain (especially barley), citron and cattle-fodder are also transferred to the god Maṇḍaleśa⁵. Thus in Arthūnā, which was a great centre of trade and economic activities as can be also inferred from numerous antiquities found there, a considerable portion of the tolls was donated to a local temple for its maintenance.

It is natural to expect more such instances in the dominions of the Caulukyās, for the coastal region of Gujarāt facilitated more trade and industry. The term toll-house (*śulka-maṇḍapikā*) is mentioned in several

1 *El*, xix, no. 10, ll. 17-31.

2 *El* xiv, no. 21, verses 73-74.

3 *Ibid*, verses 69-62.

4 *Ibid.*, verses 71-72. Barnett's translation with footnotes on *El*, xiv, pp. 309-10 has been followed.

5 *Ibid.*, verses 76-81.

inscriptions¹, and the practice of granting a portion of royal income from it seems to have been common. A grant of 1156 informs us that Kumārapāla granted one dramma daily out of the collection at the *maṇḍapikā* of Naḍol in favour of a temple². Another inscription gives the impression that tolls in cash on the sale of various articles were transferred by Bhīmadeva II in 1230 to two temples for defraying the expenses of the temple service and feeding the brāhmaṇas³. It seems that the local traders of Salakhaṇapuri also made to the temples certain grants in cash on the sale of various articles apparently under royal orders⁴.

The process of converting royal income from trade into religious benefactions also affected foreign trade. We know of a case from Koṅkaṇ where duties levied in coins of gold on vessels coming from outside were given away to the members of a religious sect⁵. Similar concessions may have been made to secular assignees.

All these instances from Western India are strong proof of the feudalisation of crafts and commerce. The grant to temples of cash income from the sale-tax and tolls on various commodities may be compared to money fiefs granted in mediaeval Europe. We do not know whether such fiefs in India were assigned to secular functionaries although some contributions earmarked for officials in the Kalacuri, Candella and Cāhamāna dominions may have been realised in cash and therefore may be taken as some kind of money-fief. But this is by no means certain, and hence the European analogy cannot be pressed very far.

(A survey of feudal practices in Northern India during the 11th and 12th centuries suggests that in certain

1 *IA*, vi, 202, l. 9.

2 *ABORI*, xxiii, 316-8.

3 P. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

4 *IA*, vi, 202, ll. 8-26; Abstract on p. 203.

5 *EI*, iii, no. 49, ll. 56-57.

respects feudal economy reached its climax at this time. Never before was land donated to secular and religious beneficiaries on such a large scale; never before were agrarian and communal rights undermined by land grants so widely; never before was the peasantry subjected to so many taxes and so much subinfeudation; never before were services, high and low, rewarded by land grants in such numbers as now; and finally never before were revenues from trade and industry converted into so many grants. But at the same time the period witnessed certain cracks in the feudal economy, especially in Western India, to which we shall now turn our attention. Feudalism, based on self-sufficient economy, the lesser use of coins, and the intensive subjection of the peasantry, was disturbed by the emergence of new economic forces in Northern India towards the last days of what is known as Hindu rule.)

By the end of the period the progressive role of land grants in opening new areas to cultivation seems to have been exhausted in Bengal, Bihar, U. P., Mālwa and Gujarāt. The fact that the charters of Bengal specify the yield in cash and demarcate the boundaries of the donated area¹ in precise terms shows that the colonising activities of the beneficiaries were restricted. The grants from Mālwa and Gujarāt also delimit the boundaries of the villages. The introduction of this element of precision and definition reflects the anxiety to allow no more concessions to the donees than were strictly warranted by the terms of the charters; it did not leave much scope for absorbing their pioneering activities in the colonisation of new areas.

Similarly forced labour or *viṣṭi*, so characteristic of feudalism and considered as a source of production in Western India under the Maitrakas of Valabhī, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Gurjara-Pratihāras², is not at all

1 *IB*, iii, no. 7, ll. 37-54; no. 11, ll. 39-51.

2 The term *utapadyamāna-viṣṭi* is a common phrase in their records.

mentioned in the records of the Paramāras, the Caulukyas and the Cāhamānas. Evidently the practice had died out in their dominions. Similarly the Gāhaḍavāla and Candella records do not mention forced labour. The Pāla and Sena grants, however, speak of *sarvapiḍā*, and some Kalacuri inscriptions refer to *viṣṭi*. But by and large the practice of forced labour seems to have been on the wane, which may be taken as a symptom of the loosening of the economic bonds of the feudal order. Possibly forced labour was commuted into money payments. But we have very little to support our hypothesis unless we fall back upon some evidence from Kashmir, which we have excluded from our present survey. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* informs us that forced labour consisted of carrying loads (*rūḍha-bhāroḍhi*), which were of thirteen unspecified kinds. In one case the villagers who failed to carry loads for a year were punished with fines equal to the value of the load, based on the higher prevalent prices in the neighbouring areas¹. In all likelihood these fines were levied in cash, which suggests that forced labour could be commuted by money payment. Sometimes it was commuted into payment in both cash and kind. When a temple was plundered in the reign of Harṣa (1089-1101), the priests prayed for exemption from impressed labour² on the ground of paying in cash and kind. We have, however, no clear instances of peasants securing exemption from corvée by means of monetary payment either in Kashmir or other parts of Northern India. But the increasing use of coins in this period, which we shall consider later, points to the possibility of peasants purchasing freedom from impressed labour by paying money. Further, peasant rebellions such as those of the Kaivarttas in East Bengal may also have compelled the princes to reduce the rigours of the practice. Probably the

1 Tr. M. A. Stein, vol. i, vv. 172-4, see also footnote on 172-4.

2 Ibid., 1081-88.

existence of numerous towns in Western India, as we shall see later, was connected with the disappearance of *viṣṭi*, for peasants could flee to towns where they could work as artisans and craftsmen.

Certain other developments seem to have caused dents in the self-sufficient economy of the rural areas. One was the cutting adrift of villages which had been integral parts of the economy of an area for a long time and joining them to new areas. Numerous villages granted to the temples, especially in Central and Western India, were not always situated in the area adjoining the existing property of the donees, with the result that they had to enter into new economic relationships with the temples to which they were granted, and in some respects had to sever their ties with the surrounding rural area to whose self-sufficiency they contributed. Thus the temple of Somnāth possessed as many as 2000 villages, which certainly did not form a compact territory, and villages granted by successive rulers were apparently isolated from one another. In Uttar Pradesh the process can be illustrated by the grants of villages made to the influential priestly family of Jāgu Śarmā. The estate of this family was spread over as many as 18 *pattalās* of the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom and therefore cut across the economic self-sufficiency of several units. In the scattered villages managed by him the beneficiary could change the pattern of agricultural production by insisting that the village cultivate crops suited to its soil or to the needs of the donee rather than to the exigencies of its self-sufficient economy.

Further signs of the weakening of the static rural economy of the villages can be seen in the practice of the state and its beneficiaries not making the direct use of the labour service of the craftsmen, as we find in the Candella kingdom, but of claiming the fruits of their service either in kind or cash. As a first step it seems that traders and artisans,—there being hardly

any difference between them,—were required to pay their dues in kind to the state in Western India, and were then eventually asked to pay in cash, especially in respect of the sale of their wares. Instead of forcing the artisans and traders to remain attached to the village granted to the temple, they were required to pay dues in money with which the temple could buy its services. Thus in Mālwa, Rājasthān and Gujarāt it was considered no longer necessary to develop the temple as a self-sufficient economic unit by providing it with the services of artisans and traders.

Although this kind of development was mainly confined to towns, their number was not inconsiderable. On the basis of various sources Dasharatha Sharma has compiled a list of 131 places in the Cāhamāna dominions¹, most of which seem to have been towns. D. C. Ganguly² enumerates 20 towns in the Paramāra kingdom, mainly in Mālwa. To this may be added the well-known town Arthūnā, their second capital. Pushpa Niyogi has compiled a list of 8 towns under the Caulukyas in Gujarāt³, although along with the port-towns with which the whole of Gujarāt coast was studded their number would be far greater. The Arab account speak of numerous towns in Sind and Western India⁴. On the strength of the itinerary of Alberuni and the narratives of Sultan Mahmud's expedition into India Pushpa Niyogi has prepared a list of 25 towns⁵ in Northern India, which is not exhaustive. The number of towns, however, do not seem to be large in Eastern India although all the nine victory-camps of the Pālas may have been towns. To these may be added four capitals of the Senas in

1 Op. cit., Appendix L.

2 *History of the Paramāra Dynasty*, p. 239.

3 P. Niyogi, op. cit., pp. 120-21.

4 Ibid., pp. 119-21.

5 Ibid., p. 121.

northern and eastern Bengal¹. In general the records leave the impression that Western India contained numerous towns, some of which were fairly large.

From the existence of such towns in Western India it is reasonable to assume a considerable amount of surplus produce, by way of food and clothing, to meet the needs of the people living there. Some towns were very thickly populated; Anahilapāṭaka contained as many as 48 marts². The needs of these towns naturally involved a good volume of internal trade between them and the villages, which must have shaken the stagnant economy of the latter.

The earlier trade in horse, oil and salt grew in later times in Rājasthān. The Cāhamāna inscriptions unmistakably point to thriving commerce carried on by horse-dealers, *mahājanas*, *seṭhs*, and oilmillers³. Especially trade in horse and salt from the Sāmbhar lake was a source of profitable tolls to the state. But it is significant that from the 11th century internal trade came to cover several daily necessities which affected the life of the common people. The Cāhamāna inscriptions show that Rājasthān had a good trade in wheat, *mudga*, resin, oil, betel-leaves, spices, pulses, etc.⁴ We also hear of merchants in bronze and cloth and also of distillers and weavers⁵. In fact the Cāhamāna inscriptions unfold the genesis of the activities of the Mārwar merchants who became famous as Mārwāris in later times.

The Pāramāra records also indicate considerable internal trade. An inscription refers to flourishing trade in the area round the town of Arthūnā in Rājasthān. Here trade was carried on in articles of daily consumption such as grain, especially barley, thread, cotton, cloth,

1 Ibid., pp. 118-9 (Lakhnauti, Nadiyā, Vijayapura, Vikramapura).

2 *Kumārāpālacarita* quoted in P. Niyogi, op. cit., p. 120.

3 Ed. D. R. Bhandarkar, *EI*, xi, no. 4.

4 Dasharatha Sharma, op. cit., p. 298.

5 Ibid., p. 299.

salt, sugar¹ and oil. It seems that madder was brought from Bengal to Arthūnā for sale². Another record of a Paramāra feudatory from Nāsik speaks of shops and oilmills in that area³.

The traders, known as *vaṇiks*, seem to have been a very prosperous class in Gujarāt. The great millionaires Vastupāla, Tejapāla and Jagaḍu are well known⁴. They derived their wealth from both internal and foreign trade, and were obviously assisted by ordinary merchants whose economic activities touched the life of the common folk. A class of merchants known as *pedaio* sold grain, etc. (*kaṇ-ādi-vikretā-vaṇik*)⁵. We also hear of an ordinary trader who⁶ sold only gram (*caṇaka-vikraya-kāra*). This evidence would imply that even in the rural areas some people paid for their food.

Uttar Pradesh gives poor indication of internal trade, although the use of the term *pravaṇikara* in the Gāhaḍavāla inscriptions signifies taxes levied from retail traders. Similarly Bundelkhand, which produced such cash-crops as indigo, cotton and sugarcane, may have developed considerable rural trade. The gifts recorded by a śreṣṭhī family show that traders formed a wealthy community in the Candella territory⁷. Trade seems to have flourished more vigorously in Baghelkhand under the Kalacuris. Every town and village had its toll-house (*maṇḍapikā*). The articles of sale in the markets of towns and villages included food grains, salt, pepper, liquor, oil, grass and vegetables⁸.

Internal trade had not altogether languished in the earlier period in Eastern India, as would appear from

1 *EI*, xiv, no. 21, 69-79.

2 *Ibid.*, verse 69.

3 *Ibid.*, xix, no. 10, ll. 17-31.

4 A. K. Majumdar, *The Caulukyās of Gujarat*, pp. 267, 284-85.

5 *Desināmamāla* of Hemacandra vi, 59.

6 Merutuṅga, *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, ed. Jinavijaya Muni, p. 70.

7 S. K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajurāho*, pp. 181-2.

8 Mirashī, *CII*, iv p. clxx.

the mention of the *tarikā* (officer in charge of ferry dues or navy), and the *śaulkika* (collector of tolls) in Pāla land charters, although these officers are not named in the Sena charters. Now we hear of a new officer the *haṭṭapati*¹ or supervisor of markets.

On the whole in the 11th and 12th centuries Northern India witnessed an expansion of commercial activities, which seem to have declined during the four centuries following the collapse of the Gupta rule. One of the main causes of the increasing internal trade seems to have been the revival of foreign trade, to which we shall now turn our attention.

It would be wrong to hold that all foreign trade and commerce stopped between 750 and 1000, but signs of foreign trade between 600 and 900 seem to be weak. The evidence we have for the external commerce of this period does not compare favourably with Indian trade with the Roman empire in the time of the Sātavāhanas and Kuṣāṇas or with the Byzantine empire in Gupta times; nevertheless, a sizable coastal trade was carried between India on the one hand and the Persian Gulf and Arabia via the Arab sea on the other. The Arab accounts mention a few ports on the western coast of India in the 7th century². Most Arab accounts of the foreign commerce of India, however, relate to the 9th and particularly to the 10th century, when they mention many Indian ports³. This indicates the revival of trade on the western coast from the 10th century A. D., which can be linked up with the maritime activities of the Coḷas from the close of the 10th century. A succession of strong Coḷa rulers contributed to the progress of commerce with South-East Asia.

An epigraphic record of 1008 shows that Koṅkan

1 *IB*, iii, no. 16, l. 16.

2 Nadvi, *Arab-Bharat Ke Sambandh*, p. 46.

3 *Ibid*.

carried on flourishing commerce not only with the coastal areas but also with distant foreign lands (*dvīpāntara*)¹, which was a source of income in cash to its ruler, the *māṇḍalika* Raṭṭarāja. He charged a *gadiyāṇa* of gold from every vessel arriving from foreign lands, and a *dharāṇa* of gold from every ship arriving from a place called Kandalamūliya in the coastal area.² Coastal trade may have been carried on in local boats. All this indicates growing commerce on the Koṅkaṇ coast, which also had a town of merchants called Maṇigrāma³.

Similarly India maintained commercial intercourse with China. At first most of this trade was monopolised by the Arabs and later by the Chinese, both of whom carried on commerce in their own ships. There is hardly any indication of trade being carried by Indian merchants abroad until the 10th century A.D.⁴ But the *Mānasollāsa*, a work of the 12th century, advises that Indian ships should pay 1/10 of the price of their goods as duty in the harbours of the king⁵. In the 13th century we hear of an Indian merchant called Jagaḍu who used to trade regularly with Persia and transport goods in his own ship. His agent at Hormuz was an Indian⁶. Besides, references to the piratical activities of Indians on the western coast, for instance Marco Polo's complaints against Gujarāti pirates in the 13th century, presuppose the existence of shipping⁷.

Certainly India witnessed considerable shipbuilding

1 *EI*, iii, 296-97.

2 *EI*, iii, no. 40, ll. 56-57.

3 *Ibid.*, i. 44.

4 A. K. Majumdar, *The Caulukyās*, p. 267.

5 *GOS*, xviii, Ch. IV, verses 374-6.

6 A. K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 267. The work *Jagaḍucarita*, whose hero is a merchant, was completed some time in the 14th century. *Ibid.*, p. 420. In 1211 a Hindu merchant carried on flourishing trade at Ghazni. (*Ibid.*, p. 267).

7 A. K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

activities in the 13th century. Marco Polo refers to many Indian ships which visited Fu-Chau (Fuju) in China with many merchants and carried cargoes of various merchandise to that place¹. Moreover, we hear of several busy ports visited by the Arabs and the Chinese on the western coast. The number of ports mentioned in the 10th century by the Arab writers is far greater than that we find in the 7th century². All this points to some revival of the foreign commerce of India on its west coast during the period from the 10th to the 13th century, corroborated by increasing references to money tolls and sale of commodities in local contemporary donation records.

The nature of foreign commerce seems to have undergone a change. In the early centuries of the Christian era India's exports consisted mainly of luxury articles, spices, silk and fine muslins. But now it was extended to tanned leather, leather goods, buckram (coarse cloth) and other textiles³. While buckram or coarse linen may have been made of hemp or flax, the Chinese account also refers to the export of fine hemp⁴. According to the Chinese and Arab accounts sugarcane and ginger were also exported from Mālwa and Gujarāt during this period. Coarse cloth, cotton goods, hemp and sugar were substantial exports for they would have a wider market, not confined to the upper classes of Arabia and China. Fine cotton goods were exported in the early centuries of the Christian era, but hemp and sugar⁵ do not figure as exports then and thus appear to be quite new commodities of foreign trade. We have no idea of the volume in trade in these two articles, but undoubtedly they were

1 *Marco Polo*, ii, 231.

2 Madvi, *Arab-Bharat Ke Sambhandha*, p. 46.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 265-66.

4 P. Niyogi, *The Economic History of Northern India*, p. 139.

5 Sugar figures at one place as an export from India in the *Periplus*, but it was not important enough to be included in the consolidated list of exports given by that text.

something more than luxury articles, and thus their export was bound to affect ordinary producers who would be paid in cash for the sale of their cotton, hemp and sugarcane. So far as China is concerned these articles along with the usual luxury goods played the same role in denuding her of gold and silver in the 10th-12th centuries as the spices did in the case of Rome in the first century A.D., so that, like Rome, China had to place restrictions on the trade with Malabar and Quilon in India in the 12th century¹.

It is difficult to explain this revival of commerce during the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest of India. A possible factor that promoted commerce in Eastern India and explains the frequent mention of coins in the land grants of the Senas of Bengal is the increasing cultivation of two important commercial crops, coconut and arecanut. Commonly mentioned as the products granted in North and East Bengal during the 11th and 12th centuries, they do not find a place either in the grants of Gupta times or in the the Pāla grants from North Bengal. In East Bengal arecanut is first mentioned in a grant of about the 7-8th century A.D.,² but coconut seems to have been introduced a couple of centuries later. The Candra and Varman grants mention both arecanut and coconut as the products of the donated land, but they do not stipulate its yield in coins. However, most Sena grants state the income in money only in those cases in which these two products are specified. Apparently brought to

1 *Chau Ju-Kua*, p. 18f. quoted in P. Niyogi, p. 147. So far no Chinese coins have been found on the western coast of India, but the possibility of their existence cannot be discounted. Probably the Chinese sent ingots of gold and silver which were melted into coins or ornaments by the Indians. However, a large hoard of Chinese coins found in Tanjore is indicative of Chinese commercial relations with South India.

2 "The Ashrafpur Copper-plates of Devakhadga," *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, i, no. 6, p. 90, plate B, l. 8.

Bengal from South India, the two fruit trees came to be regarded as sources of income from the land from the 11th century A.D. Probably local peasants paid special taxes on these crops to the king, who made them over to religious grantees. We are not sure whether all the various uses of coconut were known to Bengal, but there is no doubt that along with arecanut it constituted an important source of income in cash to the peasants.

So far as Central and Western India is concerned, an important reason of the revival of commerce seems to be the widespread cultivation of three commercial and cash-earning crops, sugarcane, cotton, and hemp. The Candella grants of the 11th-12th centuries attest the cultivation of these crops on a wide scale in Central India. Apparently the produce of these was purchased by rural merchants, who passed it on to the ports for export. It is because of this that the peasants in the central regions paid their revenues in cash during the 13th century¹. As regards sugar it was cultivated not only in the Candella kingdom but also in Mālwa, and was exported from the coast of Gujarāt. The period saw wider use of the sugar-press, *ikṣu-nipīḍana-yantram*, mentioned in the *Deśināmamālā* of Hemacandra². This is significant, for there is no earlier Sanskrit word to denote a sugar-press³. The spread of the sugar-press gave a great fillip to the sugar industry. We do not know whether any improvement took place in the manufacture of cotton, but there is no doubt that cotton cloth was exported from Ruhmi identified with Bengal, in the 7th century, and cotton was cultivated on a wide scale in Mālwa and Gujarāt. The superior quality of Indian cotton is attested by

1 *CII*, iv, no. 116, ll. I-11.

2 II, 65 ; vi, 51 cf. iv, 45.

3 Jogesh Chandra Roy, *Ancient Indian Life*, p. 85 quoted in A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 478-9.



Marco Polo, who reports that Gujarāt produced plenty of cotton in very big trees which reached six paces in height when twenty years old¹.

Since the cultivation of sugarcane is attested not only in Central India but also in the arid zone of Rājasthān, it is obvious that advantage was taken of artificial irrigation. Here special mention may be made of *arahaṭṭas* or *araghaṭṭas*, waterwheels operated by oxen containing several buckets for drawing water from wells. First mentioned in the inscriptions of the 9th century and probably adopted from Persia, the new contrivance was slow to find favour with the Indian peasants because of their usual conservatism in a practically stagnant agrarian society. But during the next three centuries it gained in popularity, for the Cāhamāna inscriptions of the 12th and 13th centuries, found in south and south-eastern Marwar, point to the widespread use of wheel-operated wells, which may have helped the production of such cash and commercial crops as sugar, cotton and hemp.

In the 12th and 13th centuries the export of tanned leather and leather-goods to the Middle East and China seems to have assumed fair proportions. The flow abroad was facilitated by a flourishing industry at home, affirmed alike by the indigenous and foreign sources. The *Rājataranṅiṇī* refers to the leather-workers of Kashmir², and Lakṣmīdhara speaks of associations of leather-workers³. Hemacandra refers to several types of shoes and shoemakers⁴. Marco Polo states that immense quantities of hide were tanned in Gujarāt, which produced "very beautiful mats in red and blue leather"⁵.

Another factor that gave impetus to the progress of

1 A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 259.

2 Pushpa Niyogi, op. cit., p. 247.

3 B. P. Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India*, p. 204.

4 A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 261.

5 Ibid., pp. 260-61.

trade and commerce was the improvement in ship-building. The *Yuktikalpataru*, a text of the 11th century written by the Paramāra Bhoja, mentions various kinds of ships, and states that planks of wood should be joined by rope and not by iron nails which will be attracted by magnetic rocks and expose it to dangers¹. Although this appears to be a superstition, lashed timbers might give greater resilience in heavy weather than the nailed ones.

Whether any external factor contributed to trade and commerce in the 11th-12th centuries is difficult to say. Perhaps the disruption of Arab trade with Europe on account of the Crusades diverted their energies mainly to Indian trade. There was an appreciable rise in material standards in Europe in this period, and one would expect a growth in demand for luxury goods. Issue of plentiful coinage and its high standard in the reigns of Mahmūd and Mas'ūd stimulated trade between India and the Islamic East in the 11th century², although it is thought that the balance of trade lay in favour of the former. Whatever might be the precise reasons for the revival of trade and commerce such a revival cannot be doubted, and the fact that it was beginning to undermine the self-sufficient feudal economy based on land in Western India cannot be brushed aside.

Internal trade seems to have been facilitated by some improvements in the means of transport. An inscription of 955 from Bayānā in the former state of Bharatpur seems to refer to a levy as *octroi* duty on every horse-load of merchandise carried through a village granted to the god Viṣṇu by a lady member of the ruling family of the Śūrasenas³. This would suggest that from the second half of the 10th century horses began to be used

1 P. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

2 C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 79.

3 The term used is *prati-ghoṭakam ca dāne drammo devasya bhagavato vihitaḥ*, *EI*, xxii, no. 20, verse 41. In the context of the grant of two

as pack animals. Another inscription refers to a state levy made on camel-loads. A grant of a *pailā* from every incoming or outgoing caravan exceeding ten camels and twenty bullocks is made to a temple in the former Jodhpur state¹. Although these records belong to the close of the 13th century, the practice of using camels may have started earlier, for the Pāla inscriptions and the *Mānasollāsa*² show that buffaloes, camels and bullocks were used for transport in military expeditions. Thus in addition to bullocks, horses and camels came to be used for carrying goods on a wide scale. It is true that camels would not be used in Eastern India, but horses might have been used there as beasts of burden. Numerous allusions to the sale of horses in inscriptions indicate that they were valued not only for military but also for commercial purposes. We can therefore postulate that the introduction of these new means of transport made for greater speed of conveyance over a longer distance.

The progress in commerce, internal and external, can be better understood in the light of numerous references to money coinage in the epigraphic and literary records of the period as well as to the discovery of coins belonging to this time. After A.D. 1000 we find signs of the revival of coinage in Northern India, although this was mainly confined to Uttar Pradesh, Central India, Mālwa, Gujarāt and Rājasthān; the evidence regarding Eastern India including Bengal and Bihar is very weak. In fact it has been argued with force that cowrie was the medium of exchange in Eastern

villages and three dramma daily from each of the two market-places (*maṇḍapikās*), Sripathā and Vusāvaṭa (*ibid.*, verses 39-40), the alternative suggestion of R. D. Banerji that the levy was made on every horse-load seems to be correct, although he also suggests that it was made whenever a horse was sold (*ibid.*, 121).

1 *El*, xi, no. 4, xxii. ll. 4-7.

2 *CR*. XX. verse 1068.

India. In Bengal the situation certainly changed under the Senas and their contemporaries. The Sena land charters estimated the revenue yield of the donated villages or lands in terms of *kaparddaka-purāṇas*, of which nothing is heard under the Pālas. A record of 1234 from the Tippera District specified in cash the annual income of each one of the plots of land donated by Dāmodaradeva to 20 brāhmaṇas, whose total income from all these amounted to 100 *purāṇas*¹, although we are not sure whether collection was made in cash. No coins discovered so far can be ascribed with certainty either to the Sena or to the Pāla kings or to any other ruler of Bengal belonging to this period, but epigraphic references suggest that coins, less in use under the Pālas, were much in vogue under the Senas.

As we proceed westward we find more indication of the use of coins. The first Gāhaḍavāla ruler to issue coins was Madanapāla (1102-1111). Numerous coins known as drammas are attributed to his son Govindacandra (1112-1155). The frequency with which his coins are still found suggests their wide currency. Very little is known of the coins belonging to other rulers. Of the important mediaeval dynasties of Northern India the Kalacuris of Dāhala were the first to revive gold coinage, and coins of several of their kings have been discovered. The Kalacuri gold coinage was first issued by Gāṅgeyadeva (1015-40). It was followed by the Candella rulers, who did not issue any coins in the first century of their rule. The practice was begun by Kirttivarman (1060-1100) and followed by his successors, who issued drammas of three varieties. The progressively increasing use of coins in the Candella dominions is indicated by an inscription of 1212², which refers to the execution of a deed (*vitta-bandha*) mortgaging land for money although the amount involved therein is not mentioned.

1 *El*, xxx, 57-58.

2 *El*, xxv, no. I, ll. 10-14.



Coins in considerable numbers have been attributed to the so-called allied Rajput dynasties which arose on the ruins of the Pratihāra empire. Thus the Cāhamānas are credited with numerous coins, some of which have been brought to light. Their dominions show signs of prosperous trade and commerce which made such coinage necessary. Revenues from shops and the sale of commodities estimated in money were donated to the temples. As far as the Guhilas are concerned nearly 2000 silver coins, bearing the legend Śrī Guhila, were discovered at Agra in 1869¹, but their present whereabouts remain untraceable. Many of the *gadhaiya* coins, discovered in thousands, are attributed to the Guhilas and Cāhamānas. Similarly coins ranging from the last quarter of the 10th century to the first quarter of the 12th century are ascribed by Cunningham to the Tomaras, who belonged to Ajmer and Delhi. Mention may also be made of the copper coins issued by the Marwar rulers of Gwalior in the thirteenth century. Two hoards, one of 791 copper coins² and the other of 926 copper coins³, are ascribed to them.

As regards the Paramāras of Mālwa, coins are mentioned in some of their inscriptions (the Arthūnā inscription found in Bānswārā in Rājasthān.) The only Paramāra ruler to issue gold coins was Udayāditya, who ruled over parts of Central and Northern India between 1060 and 1087⁴.

The revival of coins in Central India, Uttar Pradesh, Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt can be linked with indications of increasing trade and commerce in that area, particularly in Western India. Inscriptions repeatedly mention toll-house (*maṇḍapikā*), and the transfer

1 Reported by A. C. L. Carlleyle, in *ASI*, Report for the year 1871-72, ix, 95.

2 C. R. Singhal, *Bibliography of Indian Coins*, pt. I, p. 95.

3 Ibid., p. 102.

4 Ibid., p. 96.

of cash income from shops. They show that in the coastal regions of Western India customs duties were realised in cash from foreign and Indian traders; in Konkan the first were required to pay in gold coins called *gadyāṇa*, and the second in gold coins called *dharāṇa*. The *Lekhapaddhati* contains drafts of documents which prove brisk trade and commerce, and the sale and purchase of commodities. Its provision for departments dealing with trade and mints is corroborated by epigraphic evidence from the kingdom of the Caulukyas.

A wide difference can be seen in respect of coinage and trade between Eastern India on the one hand and Northern and Western India on the other. In Eastern India including Orissa the cowrie was the chief medium of exchange. Inscriptions do not suggest much trade or many towns in this area. Apparently the self-sufficient feudal economy was stronger in the east than in the west. But surprisingly enough, if we leave out Orissa, land service grants to vassals and officials are found more commonly in the west than in the east. This may be due to the paucity of epigraphic records in Eastern India, which was subject to frequent floods and invasions.

We have, however, a very important piece of evidence from Central India which shows that revenue was assessed in cash and not in kind, as was the case in earlier times in various parts of the country. A record of the early thirteenth century (1213) informs us that a business document executed apparently by the *mahāmāṇḍalika* Pamparāja, probably a feudatory of the Kalacuris of Ratanpur, fixed the revenue of the village Jaiparā at 130 *Sarāhagaḍāma-āchus* as previously settled and 140 *Vijayarāja-ṭaṅkas*¹. It also states that the revenue of another village was fixed at 150 *Vijayarāja-ṭaṅkas*².

1 *CH*, iv, no. 116, ll. 1-11.

2 *Ibid.*, ll. 7-8.



Although a gift document executed in favour of the *gaitā* Lakṣmīdhara, it shows without doubt the practice of assessing revenue in cash. This need not be attributed to Muslim influence, for the Delhi Sultanate established in 1206 hardly covered this part of the country. On the other hand the existence of the practice under the Sultanate should be taken as a culmination of the process that had begun in North India in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The Panjab and the North-Western regions provide indications of the use of coins on a considerable scale in the latter half of the 10th century. This was partly stimulated by the Arab occupation of Sind which promoted trade contacts with Western India. Whatever might be the other reasons, the area had plenty of coined money in the beginning of the 11th century. When Mahmūd captured Multan in 1005-6 the inhabitants are said to have been forced to pay a fine of 20 million dirhams (apparently the same as dramma) to save the city from being sacked¹. From the temple in the fort of Nagarkot in the upper Indus valley Mahmūd is alleged to have taken in 1008-9 seventy million dirhams in coined money, 70,000 *mans* of gold and silver ingots and rich clothing, a folding house made of silver and a richly decorated throne². From the temple of Somnāth he is said to have taken over 20 million dinars' worth of spoil. When the Ray was captured, the army carried off 500,000 dinars' worth of jewels, 2,60,000 dinars in coined money, over 30,000 dinars' worth of gold and silver vessels, 5300 garments, suits of woven and regal (? *khusrawānī*) clothes valued at 20,000 dinars and 50 loads of books excluding those of the Mu'tzilla, philosophers and Shīā, which were burnt forthwith³. We are not concerned here with other

1 C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 76.

2 Ibid., p. 78.

3 Ibid.

items of spoil, but those in coined money certainly speak for the widespread currency of coins in Gujarāt. While the numbers of coins mentioned in the Muslim accounts indicate the actual use of coins, the existence of bullion in gold and silver points to the possibility of converting these metals into coins. In fact part of the bullion and precious stones taken from the temple treasures of India was converted into negotiable form by skilled valuers and assayers at Ghazna¹. It is true that Western India was denuded of its coins as a result of the plundering expeditions of Mahmūd of Ghazni, but the Ghaznavids issued their own coins in the Panjab, where a mixed silver-copper currency was continued on the old Hindu models². The issue of a mixed copper-silver currency there suggests that coins were used even by the common people.

A striking feature of the monetary system of the period is the gradual change from gold to silver-gilt, silver, silver-bronze and finally copper, which is illustrated by the coinage of the Candellas and the Kalacuris. Sometimes seen as setback from gold to baser metal, the process has some deeper significance. Confined to heavy transactions, gold coins would be handled only by the wealthy few. But silver, silver-bronze and copper coins would command a wider circulation among the masses of the people. Therefore what appears as a process of degeneration from pure and costly metal to base and cheap metal should be really taken as a device to meet the day-to-day exchange requirements of the common folk.

Obviously billon and copper coins would have the widest circulation among the vast masses of the people. In spite of their easy subjection to the corrosive influence of the tropical climate the survivals of the copper currency of the 11th and 12th centuries in Central and

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 79.

Western India are impressive and bear sufficient testimony to their use in ordinary transactions. Of the Gāhaḍavāla kings the copper coins of Govindacandra are known. In the 11th century the Kalacuri king Gāṅgeyadeva of Dāhala, who revived gold coinage, also issued copper coins, but more copper coins may be attributed to the Kalacuris of Ratanpur in the 12th and 13th centuries¹, although a hoard of copper coins from Bilaspur may be assigned to the beginning of the eleventh century². In the case of the Ratanpur ruler Pratāpamalla (1200-25) only his copper coins have as yet been discovered so far³. The Kalacuris initiated the Hanumān type of copper coins which were popularised by the Candellas⁴. This, sometimes recognised as drammas, seems to have been a common currency in the 12th and 13th centuries under the Candella rulers⁵, who also issued other kinds of copper coins. Copper coins were also issued by the Cāhamāns⁶, whose dominions give indication of growing rural trade. Billon coins seem to have been issued in good numbers by the Cāhamanas⁷ and the Tomaras, and in the Panjab a mixed silver-copper currency continued to be minted by the Ghznavids on the old Hindu models⁸. More hoards of billon and copper coins may be discovered in future, but what has come down to us is enough to demonstrate the advent of exchange economy among the common people in a large part of Northern and Western India.

Two other media of exchange, iron coins and cowries, also prevailed, the first in Western India and the second in Bengal and Orissa. It seems that the peasants made payment in cowries under the Senas.

1 Mirashi, *CII*, iv, pp. clxxxv-clxxxvii.

2 *JNSI*, xviii, 111-2.

3 Mirashi, *op. cit.*, p. clxxxvii.

4 *Ibid.*, p. clx.xviii.

5 S. K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajurāho*, p. 183.

6 Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, p. 303.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 305.

8 C. E. Bosworth, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

The use of silver, billon, silver-bronze, and particularly copper coins and probably cowries, was bound to soften the rigours of payment in kind and labour. We have no evidence to show whether payments in kind were converted into cash payments, although some Sena and late Kalacuri land charters clearly suggest assessment in cash, which apparently culminated in the general introduction of the system of cash payment of revenues under the Delhi Sultanate. We have no records to show whether services in labour to the state were commuted into cash payments. But the disappearance of forced labour, which prevailed in Central and Western India right from the second to the tenth century A.D., can certainly be tied up with the use of copper coins in a large part of this area. We can assume that in lieu of manual work on the construction of tanks, roads, fortresses, etc., the peasants paid some contribution in cash which enabled the authorities to carry on such work. Thus the traditional feudal structure based on payment in kind and services was weakened by the use of money.

The picture that emerges from our study is one of contrasts. (On the one hand we notice the multiplication of land grants to secular and religious beneficiaries, the intensification of subinfeudation, conversion of revenues from crafts and commerce into religious benefices, the depression of peasantry through taxes, the transfer and taking over of communal rights; on the other we notice the definite delimitation of donated land and the specification of its yield in kind and cash, the disappearance of forced labour (*visti*), the revival of internal and external trade, and the resurrection of money exchange over a wide area. At its height Indian feudalism contained certain seeds of disintegration. Therefore the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest marked both the climax and the decline of feudal economy in India.)

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The origin and development of political feudalism is to be sought in the land grants made to brāhmaṇas from the first century A. D. onwards. Their number becomes considerable in Northern India in the Gupta period and goes on increasing afterwards. The monastery of Nālandā owned 200 villages in the reign of Harṣa. Villages granted to religious donees by the Pālas and Pratihāras were considerable in number, but those allotted by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas were far more numerous. One grant mentions 1400 and another 400 villages given in this manner. Brāhmaṇas and temples were apparently granted land revenues not for rendering civil and military services to their patrons but for spiritual service. In the benefices granted to them they were allowed fiscal rights and such administrative rights as the maintenance of law and order and realisation of fines from criminals. Hsüan Tsang states that high officers of the state were paid by land grants, but this is not confirmed by contemporary epigraphs. However, if brāhmaṇas were paid by grants of revenues, how could the others be paid differently? There is hardly anything to prove that officers and others employed by the state were normally paid in cash. If secular services were remunerated in money, why were religious services left out? In fact the influence of religion being all-pervasive, the mode of payment to priests may have set the pattern for others. It was not only practical but also meritorious and auspicious to pay others by land grants. Inscriptions support the prevalence of the practice mainly from A.D. 1000. Land was granted by the ruling chiefs to their kinsmen as well as to others who served as vassals and officials. In the period before A. D. 1000 we have more

of such grants in Orissa and the Deccan than in Bengal, Bihar and U. P. But in the 11th and 12th centuries we find a sizable number of secular assignees in Northern India, particularly in the dominions of the Gāhaḍavālas, Candellas, Kalacuris, Caulukyas, and Paramāras.

Vassals were known as *bhūpāla*, *bhoktā*, *bhogi*, *bhogika*, *bhogijana*, *bhogapatika*, *bhogirūpa*, *mahābhogī*, *bṛhadbhogī*, *bṛhadbhogika*, *rājā*, *rājñī*, *rājarājanaka*, *rājyanaka*, *rāṇaka*, *rājaputra*, *rājavallabha*, *ṭhakkura*, *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *mahāsāmantādhipati*, *mahāsāmantarāṇaka*, *sāmantaka* *rājā*, *māṇḍalika* and probably *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*. Epigraphic records refer to grants made to *mahāsāmantas*, *rāṇakas*, *rājaputras* and *māṇḍalikas* and some others, but others also seem to have been endowed with land. Of these big vassals were given the privilege of using the five great musical instruments. The chief obligation of the vassals was to render military aid to their lords. Whether a similar obligation devolved on the officials who were given feudal titles and paraphernalia is not definitely known, but there is little doubt about their gradual feudalisation, especially in Mahārāṣṭra and Northern India.

What distinguished early Indian feudalism was the provision for fiscal units of 10, or 12, or 16 villages and their multiples. The law-book of Manu, a work of the first-second century A.D., lays down that collectors in charge of 10 villages or their multiples should be paid by land grants. These units persisted in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa and to some extent in the Pāla dominions. But in the kingdoms of the Gurjara-Pratihāras and their vassals and successors—the Cāhamānas, Parmāras, and Caulukyas—prevailed units of 12 or 16 villages or their multiples. Some were handed over to the members of the ruling family as personal estates, but others were possibly fiscal units placed under officers paid by land grants. Apparently these new units were imposed by the Rajputs on the subjugated population. It is hypothetical whether they had any Central Asian parallels and

whether, like the German invasion in Europe, the penetration of the Hūṇas and Gurjaras provided any external stimulus to the growth of feudalism.

The economic aspect of feudalism in India was intimately connected with the transformation of the śūdras, who were treated as the common helots of the three higher varṇas, into peasants from the Gupta period onwards, and with the depression of the old peasants into semi-serfs. Evidence for the first process can be found in the account of Hsüan Tsang, who describes the śūdras as agriculturists, a fact corroborated by Albīrūnī about four centuries later.

(The depression of the Indian peasantry in early mediaeval times can be explained by several factors, the most important of which was increase in the burden of taxation on the villagers. The Gāhaḍavāla grants mention as many as eleven taxes in the villages; if all these were realised by the state we doubt whether the peasants were left with even a bare subsistence. In addition to the transfer of these taxes in many cases the donees were given the right to fixed and unfixed, proper and improper taxes. The list of taxes in many grants, for instance in those of the Pālas, was not exhaustive, and the grantees were authorised to collect taxes covered by the term 'et cetera' (*ādi*), and 'all sources of income' (*sarv-āya-sameta* or *samasta-pratyāya*). All this implies that they could make new impositions. What the peasants paid as revenues to the state was converted as a result of grants into rents to the beneficiaries, most of whom, being individuals or religious institutions, did not have to pay any portion of their income as tax to their donors.

(A second factor that undermined the position of the peasants was the imposition of forced labour.) In the Maurya period slaves and hired labourers were subjected to such labour. But from the second century A.D. the practice seems to have been extended to all classes of

subjects. Down to the 10th century, the grants of Western and Central India indicate the prevalence of *corvée* (*viṣṭi*). In Bengal and Bihar peasants were subjected to all oppressions (*sarvapiḍā*) from which exemption was granted in the villages given to religious donees by the Pālas. Occasionally imposed by the ruling chiefs upon the villagers, impressed labour was bound to prove oppressive when transferred to local beneficiaries with a direct interest in the exploitation of the rural resources.

A third factor that worsened the condition of the peasants was the right of subinfeudation. The donees were authorised to enjoy the land, to get it enjoyed, to cultivate it and get it cultivated. Some early mediaeval law-books refer to as many as four stages of landed interests between the king and the actual tiller of the soil, which can be also inferred from the epigraphs. The right to cultivate the land or get it cultivated also implies that of ejection. A well-established practice in Mālwa, Gujarāt, Rājasthān and Mahārāṣṭra, from the fifth to the twelfth century, this tended to reduce the permanent tenants to the position of tenants-at-will. It is not clear whether such a right existed in other parts of Northern India, but it seems to have been typical of the pockets which were settled and fairly populated, abounding with cultivators. In backward aboriginal areas peasants could not leave cultivation and escape to other villages. In some parts of Central India and especially in Kangra and Orissa quite a few villages were transferred to the donees along with artisans, herdsmen and cultivators, tied down to the soil in the same manner as serfs in mediaeval Europe. Perhaps the practice was rendered necessary by the scarcity of working population for running the rural economy.

What adversely affected the peasants in the donated areas was the transfer of communal rights, presumably

from the villagers to the donees. The boundaries of many gift-villages were left undefined, and thus could be taken advantage of by the beneficiaries to increase the land in their personal possession. Similarly the right to barren land, jungles, pastures, trees, water-reservoirs, etc., would enable them to tax the peasants for using these. The transfer of such rights obviously flowed from the theory of royal ownership, but, once given to the donees, in practice it meant individual ownership at the cost of the undefined but customary rights enjoyed by the villagers. That there existed certain communal rights can be inferred from the fact that in Gupta times land could not be sold in Bengal without the consent of the community and that in making their grants the Pālas formally took account of the wishes of the villages concerned. Thus the transfer to the beneficiaries of agrarian rights enjoyed by the village to the grantees tended to dispossess the peasantry and created new property relations.

These factors may be taken as various modes of extracting services from the peasants for the benefit of either the king or his secular and religious beneficiaries. They gave rise to relations of economic subordination from which there was no escape.

How did the peasants react to the process of impoverishment? Land grants provide no answer to this question, nor do most literary texts, which are mainly courtly literature. Some texts, however, indicate two possible forms of reaction. One was to leave the country—an old practice referred to in the Jātakas. A passage from the 6th century astronomer Varāhamihira quoted in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* presents the pitiable plight of desolate villages which contain only the dilapidated walls of the houses deserted by unwilling peasants on account of the unwarranted oppression of the fief-holder (*bhogapati*)¹, whose atrocities are also

1 Ed. D. D. Kosambi and V. V. Gokhale, verse 1175.

mentioned in the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa. Similarly the *Bṛhannāradya Purāṇa* states that on account of famines and oppressive taxes people in misery migrate to more prosperous lands¹. Peasants, however, could not leave villages which were granted along with their inhabitants, for the donees had the legal authority to restrain them. The other possible form which the peasants' reaction to oppressive conditions might take is the rebellion of peasants, of which the solitary instance is the revolt of the Kaivarttas in Eastern Bengal, described by Sandhyākara-nandī in the *Rāmacarita*. Hitherto seen either as a popular revolt in which the people asserted their rights against a tyrannical ruler or as a disturbance against the rightful rulers who had been raised to the throne with the consent of the people, the significance of the event can be appreciated better if we bear in mind that the Kaivarttas were deprived of their plots of land given as service tenures² and subjected to heavy taxes³. The fact that literally naked soldiers fought with bows and arrows riding buffaloes shows that they were ordinary peasants⁴. Chariots were conspicuous by their absence in the army of Bhīma, who led the abortive revolt against Rāmapāla⁵. None the less the rising was so formidable and resistance so strong that Rāmapāla had to mobilise not only his own resources but also those of all his feudal lords to put down their revolt. It was probably a peasant uprising directed against the Pālas, who made a common cause with their vassals against the Kaivarttas. But we cannot make too much of this single event, for we have hardly anything else to illustrate this form of reaction on the part of the peasants. The usual form of reaction therefore may have been migrations. But these could not

1 Ed. P. H. Sastri, XXXVIII.

2 *EI*, xxix, 5.

3 *Rāmacarita*, II. 40.

4 *Ibid.*, 39-42.

5 *Ibid.*, 40.

be of much avail in the face of the self-sufficient, almost natural, economic systems to which the peasants were tied down in early mediaeval times. Economic conditions and political organisation being basically the same everywhere, migrations did not mean deliverance to the peasants.

〔The feudal order was based on self-sufficient economic units functioning in various parts of the country. This is indicated by the absence of coins, the prevalence of local weights and measures, and the transfer by the kings and chiefs of income in cash and kind from trade and industries to the temples.〕 The Pālas ruled for about four centuries but have left hardly any coins, and the same is the case with the Gurjara-Pratihāras and Rāṣtrakūṭas. Coins mentioned in Cāhamāna and Sena records have not been actually found. The extent of the use of coins and their bearing on economic relations in early mediaeval times is a subject worth investigation. On the basis of what we know it can be said that coins revived on a wide scale in Western and Central India only from the 11th century, which again can be linked with the revival of trade and commerce and probably the disappearance of *viṣṭi* during that period. But, leaving aside this area and period, it seems that local needs were met locally, and peasants and artisans had to be attached to the village for the purpose. Sometimes it was laid down that tax-paying artisans and peasants could not be introduced into a granted village from outside, the purpose of this being that grants should not disturb the self-sufficient economy of the villages. Monasteries and temples formed wide economic units, some of them comprising more than a hundred villages. Apparently some villages supplied grain, others cloth, and still others labour for the repair of buildings; or else every village furnished part of these articles.

The historical role of early Indian feudalism was significant for several reasons. First, land grants served

as an important means of bringing virgin soil under cultivation in Central India, Orissa and eastern Bengal. Enterprising brāhmaṇas were given useful employment in the backward, aboriginal tracts where they could spread new methods of cultivation. Some mediaeval beliefs and rituals sponsored by the priests helped material progress among the tribal people. Thus the idea that the killing of a cow was as bad as homicide helped towards the preservation of cattle wealth, so essential for agriculture. The priests taught the primitive people not only the use of the plough and manure but also fostered agriculture by giving them the knowledge of seasons and planets, especially of the recurrence of the rains. Much of this knowledge was written down in the form of the *Kṛṣi-Parāśara*¹, which seems to have been a product of this period. In the settled areas where cultivated land was granted to religious donees, they inculcated among the people a sense of broad loyalty to the established order. Secondly, land grants provided the administrative mechanism for maintaining law and order in the donated areas, in which all such powers were delegated to the donees. In return the grateful brāhmaṇas invented fictitious family trees for the ruling chiefs of the early mediaeval period, tracing their descent back to the Solar or Lunar dynasties and stressing their divine power. On the other hand secular vassals helped their lords by governing their fiefs and supplying troops in times of war. Thirdly, land grants led to the brahmanisation and acculturation of the tribal peoples, who were given scripts, art, literature and a new way of higher life. In this sense feudalism worked for the integration of the country. From their original homes in Madhyadeśa and Tīrabhukti brāhmaṇas were invited to enjoy land grants in Bengal, Orissa and Central India, which were thus brought close to one another within the orbit of the same

1 Ed & tr. G. P. Majumdar & S. C. Banerji, Introduction, p. viii.

culture. One of the main reasons why the four varṇas proliferated into numerous castes and the number of the mixed castes shot up to about 100 according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* was the necessity of finding a place in brāhmaṇical society for various tribes which were brought into direct contact with the brāhmaṇas through land grants. Thus land grants may be regarded as an important factor in annexing new areas and new peoples to the caste system, which served to give some kind of uniform social order to the whole country. At the same time such grants created vested interests leading to the fragmentation of political authority. The vastness of the country and the difficulty of communications made it all the more hard for the king to maintain political unity. In course of time the brāhmaṇas and their patrons came to identify themselves with their respective localities and helped foster local cultures, thus laying the basis for the rise of regional nationalities in the country.

[Certain features of Indian feudalism remind us of its European counterpart. The grant of villages to priests may be compared to the practice of benefices given to the Church in mediaeval Europe, (with the difference that brāhmaṇas and temples were not an organised group in India.) The secular counterpart of benefices was, however, weak in early mediaeval India. Although officers were remunerated by service tenures, these formed only a very small part of the areas placed under their charge. Hence these areas were neither fiefs nor manors as in Europe; only villages donated to the brāhmaṇas could perhaps be regarded as such. Further, vassals in India had to render to their lord mainly military and not administrative service as in Europe. But the main characteristics of European feudalism, the self-sufficient economy buttressed by lack of commercial intercourse, and the rise of landed intermediaries leading to the subservience of the peasantry, prevailed in India.]

✓ The question has been asked whether feudalism is old wine in new bottles or an altogether new phenomenon which happened once only¹. The answer in relation to India depends on what we mean by feudalism. If we see feudalism merely as political disintegration and administrative decentralisation brought about by chiefs and vassals we will have to admit that it occurred again and again in Indian history till the establishment of British Rāj. But if we see feudalism as a form of social order in which the possessing class appropriated the surplus produce of the peasants by exercising superior rights over their land and persons we can say that the phenomenon did not appear before the advent of the Guptas. ✓ In the age of the *R̥g Veda* tribal chiefs supported by priests mainly lived on the spoils of war plundered from the indigenous and foreign tribes. In later Vedic and post-Vedic times princes and priests lived on a share of the produce realised from the peasants as well as on the services rendered by the śūdras. In the Maurya and post-Maurya period, down to the beginning of the Christian era, they largely lived on cash payment rendered possible by the large number of coins issued by the state. They also used the services of slaves and hired labourers who were virtually forced labour and who were engaged in production². But from the Gupta period onwards they began chiefly to live on the revenues from the land earmarked for them and then from the 8th century A.D. onwards directly on the land itself. Naturally never before were the peasants and craftsmen attached to the land subjected to such direct control of the priests, temples, chiefs, vassals and officials as in the five centuries following the fall of the

1 S. C. Sarkar, *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, iii (1962-63), 126.

2 Some of these arguments are developed by the author in Chapter V and VI of *Śūdras in Ancient India*, and in "Stages in Ancient Indian Economy," *Enquiry*, no. 4.



Gupta empire. Never before was the class of landed intermediaries so deeply entrenched both politically and economically as during this period. The pre-Muslim mediaeval period may be regarded as the classical age of feudalism in India, for the Muslims introduced large-scale cash payment¹ which loosened the direct control of the landed intermediaries over the peasants. Thus the feudalism of our period was largely concerned with realising the surplus from the peasants mainly in kind through superior rights in their land and through forced labour, which is not found on any considerable scale either before the early centuries of the Christian era or after the Turkish conquest of India. The whole political structure was reared on land grants, so that both secular and religious beneficiaries developed a vested interest in the preservation of feudal principalities not only against similar rivals but also against the insurrections of the peasants.

Indian feudalism, however, passed through several distinct stages. The age of the Guptas and the following two centuries saw the beginnings of land grants to temples and brāhmaṇas, and the number of such grants increased steadily and their nature changed basically in the kingdoms of the Pālas, the Pratihāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. In the earlier period only usufructuary rights were generally given, but from the 8th century onwards proprietary rights were transferred to the donees. (The process of grants culminated in the 11th and 12th centuries when Northern India was parcelled into numerous political units largely held by secular and religious donees, who enjoyed the gift villages as little better than manors. But in Western and Central India the classical type of feudalism was corroded by the revival of trade and commerce, the increasing use of coins, and the disuse of forced labour.)

¹ Moreland, *Agrarian System of Moslem India*, pp. 204-5.

APPENDIX I

THE LAND SYSTEM IN MEDIAEVAL ORISSA

(c. A. D. 750-1200)

During early mediaeval times Orissa witnessed the rise and fall of fifteen or more dynasties, many of them ruling contemporaneously. At a time when communications were primitive, the mountainous nature of the greater part of the region helped to sustain numerous kingdoms comfortably nested in reasonably defensible areas. Their existence was perpetuated by the predominance of aboriginal tribes, passionately fond of their independence. Several dynasties such as the Bhañja and Tuṅga seem to have been founded by indigenous chiefs, improvised into respectable kṣatriyas by brāhmaṇical associations,—a practice which still lingers in the neighbouring tracts of Chotanagpur. In Orissa although the rulers of the hilly states owed allegiance to those of the seaboard, the tie was slender and tenuous, and in practice the whole territory was parcelled out amongst various ruling houses. The rulers granted land to vassals, officials, temples, and above all to brāhmaṇas, which led to the further subdivision of land in Orissa. The copper-plate land grants, which are more numerous in this State than in Bengal and Bihar during the same period, show that a considerable class of religious beneficiaries and secular assignees was imposed upon the common cultivators.

The secular assignees comprised vassals and officials. Records of direct land grants in favour of vassals are very few, but nearly a dozen terms mentioned in the grants seem to stand for landed vassals. Thus the *bhūpālas*, literally the protectors of the earth, may have been important landed barons, who alone were notified

of some land grants under the Bhañjas of Khijjiṅga towards the end of the tenth century. Perhaps the aboriginal kingdom consisted of congeries of territorial units, each under a tribal chief (adorned with the Sanskrit title *bhūpāla*), who bore the burden of administration in his district. At this stage under the Khijjiṅga branch there was no place for officials and other dignitaries, who are mentioned in many other Bhañja grants. For some time under the Bhañjas the *bhogīs* and *sāmantas* figured as important elements in the body politic, for only these two dignitaries are addressed in a grant of Vidyādhara-bhañjadeva¹. The term *bhogī* occurs frequently in the Bhauma-Kara and Bhañja charters. Sometimes it is taken in the sense of a village headman, but this office was held by the *mahattara* who worked under the supervision of the *mahāmahattara*²; the literal meaning of the term suggests that the *bhogī* did not have to pay any revenues for the land held by him. Perhaps he received assignments in return for administrative service. In the Bhañja kingdom under Vidyādhara-bhañja such fiefs were so considerable that the rural people were classified into two units, the inhabitants of the regularly administered districts (*viṣaya*) and those of the assigned areas (*bhoga*)³. Under a Somavamśī ruler the *bhogīs* formed a distinct body known as the *bhogijana*⁴. We also find fief holders, who were as good as *bhogīs* (*bhogirūpa*) but enjoyed limited rights⁵. The *bhogīs* seem to have been connected with revenue administration, and a few of them held the post of chief accountant (*mahākṣa-pāṭalika*) under the Bhauma-Karas and were employed

1 *EI*, ix, no. 37, l. 16.

2 *EI*, xv, no. 1, ll. 1-10; cf. D.C. Sircar, *ibid.*, xxix, 85-86.

3 *bhogy-ādi viṣaya janapadam*, *EI*, ix, no. 37 ff ll. 16-7.

4 *IHQ*, xxxv, no. 2, Balijhari (Narsinghpur) Copper-Plates, l. 36.

5 *EI*, xxviii, 323.

in drafting land charters¹. A superior *bhogī* was known as the *mahābhogī*, mentioned in an inscription of an unspecified family², but in this sense the *bṛhadbhogī* appears frequently in the Bhauma-Kara grants³. This officer is understood as a village headman⁴, but in our view he was a higher assignee, enjoying more villages than a *bhogī*. As the *bhogīs* and *bṛhadbhogīs* recur in the Bhauma-Kara grants⁵, we have here a hierarchy of landed magnates.

A graded relationship, possibly regulated by the grant of land and the extent of the supply of military aid to the overlord, existed between the *sāmanta* and the *mahā-sāmanta*, who were important elements in the dominions of the Bhauma-Karas and their feudatories. A feudatory Tuṅga ruler addresses his land grant only to the *sāmantas*⁶, which shows that only they mattered in administration. The rank of the *mahāsāmantādhipati*, a title applied to the Nanda feudatory Devānanda III (end of the ninth century), was still higher, and he could make land grants in his own right⁷. Whether he assigned fiefs to the *mahāsāmantas* and *sāmantas* is not known. But we have definite evidence that the two successive Bhaṇja rulers of Khijjiṅga allotted villages to the *māhāsāmanta* Vaṭṭa⁸, whose father Muṇḍi was a *sāmanta*⁹. Apparently the son rose in rank and augmented the fief acquired by his father. Although we have no epigraphic records to show that the *sāmantas* were endowed with land, their later position as an important

1 Binayak Misra, *Mediaeval Dynasties of Orissa*, pp. 102-3, no. 12; *El*, xv, no. 1, ll. 33-4; *JBORS*, ii, 426-7, ll. 40-42.

2 Misra, op. cit., pp. 24-25, Inscr. no. 1.

3 *IHQ*, xxi, 221, ll. 27-40.

4 *Ibid.*, 217.

5 *El*, xxix, 85-86.

6 *JASB*, NS, xii (1916), 291ff.

7 *El*, xxvi, 77.

8 *JASB*, xl, no. 3, 166-8.

9 *Ibid.*, 168.

landowning element in Orissa seems to have developed out of their enjoyment of fiefs in the early mediaeval period.

The *rāṇakas* were another group of landholders, possibly serving as military vassals. They were identical with the *rājyanakas*, who were originally members of the royal family, and under the Bhañjas constituted a class (*varga*) by themselves¹. The epithet *upajīvijana* applied to them² indicates that they lived on the bounties given to them by the king. Even persons who did not belong to the ruling house came to be known as *rāṇakas* and were granted land. The Somavamśī ruler Mahābhavagupta II (1000-15) granted a village to a brāhmaṇa *rāṇaka*, whose grandfather had emigrated from Śrāvastī³. Some *rāṇakas* were assigned more than one village, as can be inferred from a charter by which a *rāṇaka* under the Gaṅga ruler Vajrahasta (1038-70) regranted a village⁴. This class of vassals held important administrative posts, especially under the Somavamśīs. They acted as executors of land grants⁵, chief accountants⁶, and ministers of peace and war⁷. In the feudal hierarchy of the Somavamśīs they occupied a high position, preceded by the *rājñī* (queen) and followed by the *rājaputra* (royal prince)⁸. The *rājñīs* probably had their personal estates, particularly under the Bhauma-Karas who could boast of six women rulers. This seems also to be true of the *rājaputras*, one of whom was given as dowry a tax-free village by a high officer of Vajrahasta⁹.

1 *svā-vamśa-samudbhav-āṣeṣa-rājanya-(va)rgga*, *El*, xviii, no. 29, ll. 17-8.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *El*, iii, no. 47, plate F, ll. 28-42.

4 *Ibid.*, no. 31, p. 222.

5 Misra, *Dynasties of Mediaeval Orissa*, pp. 102-3, Inscription no. 12.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 17, Inscription no. 10.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

8 *El*, iii, no. 47, plate F, ll. 33-34.

9 *Ibid.*, no. 31, ll. 9-15.

The *rājavallabhas*, ranking next to the *rājaputras*¹, were royal favourites, who could not have been rewarded except in the usual way of being favoured with villages².

We can enumerate the different categories of vassal landholders in Orissa : *bhūpāla*, *bhogī*, *bhogirūpa*, *mahābhogī*, *bṛhadbhogī*, *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *mahāsāmantādhipati*, *rājñī*, *rājyanaka* or *rāṇaka*, *rājaputra* and *rājavallabha*. Most of them seem to have been given military obligations and to have lived on the revenues assigned to them. We have no statistics with which to establish the relative status and rank of these landowning elements, but certainly their number and importance in Orissa were far greater than in the neighbouring regions.

Quite a few villages were held by the officials, who were allotted land revenues as remuneration for their services. The Somavaṃśī ruler Mahābhavagupta I (935-70) granted four villages in Kosala by three land charters to his brāhmaṇa chief minister Sādhāraṇa³. The Nanda king Devānanda III (899) granted a village in the Cuttack District to Yaśodatta, his kāyastha minister of peace and war⁴. Two Bhañja rulers of Khiṇjali, both brothers, each granted a village to an astrologer in the second half of the 12th century⁵. The astrologer, who occupies a high status in the Sena and Gāhaḍavāla list of dignitaries, may have earned assignments from the Bhañjas of Khijinga for his services in deciding suitable days and times for all activities of the king. A more secular assignment was made by the Gaṅga ruler Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga (1076-1138), who endowed his trusty agent (*āpta-kriyāya*) Coḍagaṅga with a village along with a hamlet in Kaliṅga⁶.

1 Ibid., no. 47, plate F, ll. 33-34.

2 Supra, p. 277.

3 *EI*, iii, no. 47, B, ll. 4-5, C, ll. 4-5 ; Fleet, *ibid.*, 345.

4 Ibid., xxvi, no. 26, ll. 19-33.

5 *EI*, xviii, no. 29, ll. 19-29 ; xix, 43 & fn. 1.

6 Ibid., iii, p. 174, ll. 30-34.



The typical service grants of the Gaṅga rulers seem to have been made to military functionaries known as *nāyakas*¹, some of whom were *vaiśyas*. According to a charter issued in the year 526 of the Gaṅga era under Madhukāmārṇava, son of Anantavarman², three villages were together formed into a *vaiśya-agrahāra* and granted to a certain Ērapa Nāyaka, the son of Mañci Nāyaka of the *vaiśya* caste³. This cannot possibly mean a grant to an army officer for running an educational foundation, the sense in which the term *agrahāra* was ordinarily used in earlier grants; on the other hand it seems to have been an assignment for military service. Some evidence of a grant to a *nāyaka* is also found in an inscription of Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga, who made a perpetual grant of a tax-free village to his dependant Mādhava⁴. The instances quoted above, though not many, are more numerous than those we find in Bihar and Bengal during this period, and suggest that in mediaeval Orissa civil and military officials were paid by grants of villages, which were also assigned to vassals for military service.

As against a dozen vassals and officials, we have records of land grants to nearly three hundred *brāhmaṇas*⁵, most of whom seem to have been imported from outside. The *brāhmaṇas* are addressed in a few Bhañja landgrants but not in many others belonging to the Bhauma-Karas, the Tuṅgas, the Somavaṃśīs and the Gaṅgas. Either the areas in which these grants were made did not have any *brāhmaṇa* population or it was not so numerous and important as to deserve

1 *Madras Report on Epigraphy*, 1913-9, Appendix A, no. 3.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 5.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *IA*, xviii, 171-2, ll. 109-13.

5 This number is based on the list of inscriptions given in Mista, *op. cit.*; since the publication of his work in 1934 more land grants have been discovered in Orissa, but perhaps they do not indicate any material change in the ratio between the secular and religious vassals.

special mention in the grants. The lists of the donees show that they were invited to Orissa mainly from Madhyadeśa, Tirabhukti, Rāḍha, Vaṅga and Varendra¹. There is a view that the Madhyadeśa mentioned in the Orissa land grants was situated between Bengal and Orissa; at any rate there is nothing to suggest that it formed part of Orissa. Some grants indicate that although the brāhmaṇas came from outside they had intermediate stays in Oḍra², from where they were taken into the other parts of Orissa.

Generally individual brāhmaṇas were granted land, but sometimes the number of beneficiaries ranged from two to two hundred. The Bhauma-Kara king Subhākaradeva I, who flourished in the middle of the eighth century A. D., combined two villages in northern Tosali into one and granted the whole to two hundred brāhmaṇas of various *gotras* and Vedic schools³. This reminds us of a land grant made jointly to one hundred brāhmaṇas by Lokanātha in East Bengal⁴, where āryaniśation by means of land grants had begun earlier. In Orissa this process was especially carried on by some brāhmaṇa rulers such as the Tuṅgas and Gaṅgas. Gayāḍatuṅga, whose ancestors had come to Orissa from Rohtās in the Shāhābād District⁵, played an important part in distributing land in the Talcher area to the brāhmaṇas from outside. In one case he granted the fertile land of a village to eleven brāhmaṇas from Ahicchatrā⁶; in another he apportioned out a village among three brāhmaṇas from Varendra, whose family originally hailed from Śrāvastī⁷. Thus this adventurous brāhmaṇa ruling family installed

1 Misra, *op. cit.*, Index, p. i.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *EI*, xv, no. I, ll. 1-30.

4 *Ibid.*, no. 19, ll. 35-50.

5 *JASB*, NS, xii, 292.

6 *JASB*, NS, V, 347 ff., ll. 22-20, 33-34.

7 *Ibid.*, xii, 293-4, ll. 22-32.

several brāhmaṇa landholders in Orissa. Similarly the Gaṅgas seem to have introduced brāhmaṇa land-owners in the Telugu-speaking areas of their dominions.

The significance of landgrants to brāhmaṇas is not difficult to appreciate. The grantees brought new knowledge which improved cultivation and inculcated in the aborigines a sense of loyalty to the established order upheld by the rulers, who could therefore dispense with the services of extra staff for maintaining law and order. In return for performing these functions the brāhmaṇa donees were given all fiscal rights, amounting to virtual ownership of the land.

These fiscal rights enjoyed by the rulers and transferred to the donees were different in backward areas from those in the more developed parts of India. Land grants in forest areas were made under the Bhañjas, the Somavaṃśis and the Gaṅgas. Yaśobhañjadeva of Khiñjali granted a tax-free village called Pātikomyāṇa (apparently a non-āryan settlement) with its trees, creepers, thickets and forest (*aranya*), along with the rights to fishing and catching tortoises¹. The village in question was obviously surrounded by forests. A Somavaṃśī charter of Mahābhavagupta IV, who ruled over Western Orissa and South Kosala in the beginning of the eleventh century, granted two villages, which were given along with the right of killing snakes (*ahidaṇḍa*) and elephants (*hastidaṇḍa*)². Probably the area abounded in elephants, for the district in which the two villages were situated was called Airāvaṭṭamaṇḍala³. The locality was inhabited by the Śavaras (now Saoras), noted for their knowledge of elephants, and huge snakes living in the holes and caves of the hills⁴. The present grant, which

1 *EI*, xviii, no. 29, ll. 16-22

2 *JBORS*, xvii, 1 ff., ll. 29-49.

3 *Ibid*, ll. 37-49.

4 *Ibid.*, ll. 18-21.

was conferred as a fief (*upabhoga*) on two brothers, carried rights to all future taxes (*bhaviṣyat-kara*)¹. It is not clear whether future taxes meant those levied by the king or the donee. But the latter interpretation would imply an extraordinary right, by virtue of which the donees could reduce the villagers to complete serfdom. Some new fiscal rights, appropriate to forest areas, are found in a charter of the last Śomavaṃśī ruler Someśvaradeva. He gave away plots of land (*khaṇḍa-kṣetra*), belonging to two villages, and they carried the rights to the enjoyment of ivory (*hasti-danta*), tiger's skin (*vyāghra-carma*) and various animals (*nānā-vanacara*) as well as of different trees such as tamarind and palmyra, along with forests². In all the three above grants the boundaries of the villages were not specified, which left scope for their expansion into the neighbouring jungles. But in a grant of the Gaṅga king Anantavarman the donated village was described as practically surrounded by jungles, trees and rocks³, which shows that it was situated in a forest area. Although the terms of this land grant are not laid down, those of others clearly indicate that certain fiscal dues such as rights to trees, forests, hides, fishes, etc., were characteristic of land situated in backward areas.

A striking feature of the land revenue system in settled areas was the transfer by the donors of villages not only with various kinds of dues but also with weavers, brewers, cowherds and other subjects (*prakṛtikah*). The practice was followed by the Bhauma-Kara rulers for about one hundred years from the middle of the 9th century A. D.⁴, and also by their feudatories the

1 Ibid., ll. 37-49. Only the terms of the grant of one village are indicated, but the grant of the second village may also have been governed by the same terms.

2 *EI* xxviii, no. 50, ll. 3-8.

3 Ibid., iii, no. 3, ll. 18-22.

4 H. P. Shastri, "Seven Copper-plate Records of Land grants from Dhenkanal: G-Grant of Tribhuvana Mahādevī", *JBORS*, ii, 426-7. ll. 24-32.

Bhañjas¹ and Tuṅgas². Of the subjects transferred the mention of weavers and brewers suggests that cloth-making and liquor-making were indispensable rural crafts. Further, the transfer of cowherds points to the importance of pastoral economy in this part of the country. Possibly the transfer of various other artisans and peasants is covered by the term *prakṛti*, which stands for the general inhabitants of the village. The fact that they were specifically made over to the donee shows that they were attached to the soil as artisans and husbandmen³ and in case of oppression could not seek shelter in another village or reclaim virgin land of which there was plenty in this region. A similar provision occurs in some 12th century Candella inscription⁴, which transfer artisans, peasants and traders to the donees. But in Orissa this practice prevailed on a far wider scale and for a longer period of time. Here it may have been found necessary on account of the scarcity of working population for running the rural economy. But such grants reduced the villagers to the condition of semi-serfs, producing surplus for the benefit of brāhmaṇa beneficiaries. Many of these were allotted *sa-gulmaka* privileges, which have been taken to mean hunting rights⁵. But the term, on the basis of Manu⁶, should be understood as military outposts stationed in the villages by the king, who transferred them to the donees. Control over the local machinery for coercion would enable the grantees to exercise their fiscal rights effectively and to maintain the self-sufficient

1 *sa tantuvāya-gokula-śauṇḍhi (ḍi) k-ādi-prakṛti*... Ibid., *JBORS*, xvi, 81-3, ll. 18. 24 ; *EI*, xxix, 85-6 ; *IHQ*, xxi, 221, ll. 28-38.

2 *EI*, xxv, no. 14, ll. 12-20.

3 *JBORS*, vi, 239, 115-6.

4 *sa-kāru-karṣaka-vaṇig-vāstavyam*. *EI*, xx, no. 14, B plates, l. 19. This is my emended reading on the basis of a land grant of Madanavarman published in a recent issue of *Bhārati* by V. S. Misra.

5 H. P. Shastri, Ibid., ii, 426-7.

6 VII. 114.



rural economy by means of force. We also notice the gradual undermining of customary communal rights in land. The donors transferred trees, jungles, rivers, etc., to the grantees¹. Later survivals indicate that in earlier times the villagers had free access to all these local resources, although they were not conscious of their common ownership. But once these were specifically made over to the donees, the latter would not allow their use by the villagers without charge. Such a practice lingered till the 19th century in U. P., where we find local chiefs levying an axe-tax for felling trees². Besides, the villagers could no longer easily reclaim the jungle land for cultivation. On the other hand as the families of the beneficiaries would multiply there would be a natural tendency to appropriate the fallow land for their use³, thus depriving the peasants of their natural rights to expand into the waste land. This was bound to lead to unequal distribution of land in the villages, the lion's share going to the donees and their descendants. Moreover, they had the additional advantage of being vested with numerous fiscal rights, which in course of time gave them practical ownership of land. This development, however, was not typical of Orissa; the transfer of all agrarian rights enjoyed by the villagers was a usual feature in the mediaeval grants of Northern India.

The list of the sources of land revenue, due to the ruler and conferred on the donees, is impressive. But what share of the produce was claimed and how the demand was calculated are not known. Two land grants suggest that assessment was made in money. In one instance the revenue of the whole village granted to a brāhmaṇa was estimated as 44 rūpaka⁴ and in

1 *EI*, xviii, no. 29, ll. 19-22.

2 Baden-Powell, *Land System in British India*, i, 128-9.

3 *Ibid.*, i, 173.

4 *JASB*, NS, xii (1916), p. 295, ll. 22-36.

another as 42¹. In Bengal money estimates first appear in the eleventh century, in the land grants of the Senas. But it is doubtful whether actual collection was made in money either in Bengal or Orissa during early mediaeval times. The revival of money economy does not seem to have been so strong as to render all payments possible in cash.

The net result of land grants was to create feudal conditions in which superior landholders were imposed upon ordinary cultivators. These were brāhmaṇas mainly invited from outside Orissa. They not only helped their patrons in maintaining power but also acted as foci of culture, providing a moral and ideological anchor to the Hindu rulers in the aboriginal sea. Gradually some aboriginal chiefs also were transformed into feudal vassals. The Māṭhara chief Puñja was given the titles *samadhigata-pañcamahāśabda* and *māṇḍalika-rāṇaka*². He was called the *adhipati* (lord) of fifteen subdivisions (*pallikās*)³, which shows that he was regarded as the owner of the land placed in his charge. Such chiefs, however, did not have the authority to grant land, although one of them, Pulindarāja was influential enough to prevail upon the Bhauma-Kara ruler Śubhākaradeva (9th century) to grant land for the maintenance of a Śaiva temple and Śaiva ascetics⁴. A third class of landed intermediaries was formed by the holders of service tenures, who were generally assigned land on the same conditions as the brāhmaṇas.

The brāhmaṇa donees, far greater in number than the secular intermediaries, were granted not only the usual fiscal dues to which the king was entitled but also the right of confining the working population to the donated land. This, together with the beneficiar-

1 *EI*, xii, no. 20, ll. 27-28.

2 D. C. Sircar, *HCIP*, v, 209.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *JBORS*, xvi, 81-82, ll. 18-24.

ies' inroads on the customary agrarian rights enjoyed by the villagers, reduced the peasants and artisans to the position of semi-serfs. In mediaeval Orissa all this gave rise to some typical features of feudal land system, which did not arise there on the ruins of any centralised empire, as in parts of Northern India, but out of a tribal aboriginal background in which the aborigines could only be assimilated to the Hindu way of life by implanting brāhmaṇa landholders in their midst.

APPENDIX II

FORTIFIED SETTLEMENTS UNDER THE PĀLAS AND CANDELLAS

Numerous petty principalities, each coveting the territory of its neighbour, made the defence aspect of the village important in the early mediaeval period. The first and probably the only detailed instructions regarding the foundation of a village by Kauṭilya provide an elaborate plan for its layout and entrust its defence to certain aboriginal tribes such as Vāgurikas, Pulindas etc., but they nowhere recommend its fortification. Some villages are also described in the works of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, but they are not fortified. It is only later that the *Mānasāra* enumerates eight kinds of village and defines a typical village as surrounded by a wall made of bricks or stone beyond which there is a ditch broad and deep enough to prevent an enemy from attacking the village¹. It further lays down that the village wall should have four gates². The *Mayamata* also recommends that all the villages should be surrounded by moats and earthen ramparts³. The importance of fortress in general is indicated by its lengthy treatment in the *Mānasāra*. It mentions as many as eight kinds of fort at one place, seven kinds at another, and again three kinds of mountain fort at another place, thus giving us a total of eighteen classes of fort⁴. Thus, if we bear in mind all this evidence, it would appear that the age of the *Mānasāra* was an age of fortresses. We do not know how far the instructions of the texts were followed. The boundaries of the villages specified in the land

1 P. K. Acharya. *Mānasāra Series*, vi, 102.

2 Ibid., 102-3.

3 IX. 60.

4 *Mānasāra Series*, vi, 104.

grants do not refer to the surrounding wall. Evidently the *Mānasāra* refers to a special type of villages which were either the seats of local authorities set up by the king or the seats of local chiefs and vassals. Some of these villages may have developed into strong fortresses.

In spite of calamities, natural and man-made, numerous early mediaeval fortresses have survived all over north India. Here we present a rough survey of the fortified sites in the Pāla and Candella dominions¹. So far as archaeological evidence is concerned, we seem to be a little more informed of the Pāla fortresses. Several fortified settlements of Pāla times are found in Monghyr, and the adjoining parts of Bhagalpur, Gaya and Patna. South of the Gaṅgā was the fort of Monghyr, known as Mudgagiri, important enough to be the victory camp and probably the capital of the Pālas. In its neighbourhood lay several fortresses. Surface explorations show that the present villages of Rāmpur and Pokhrāmā were fortified settlements of the Pāla period in the Sadar Subdivision of Monghyr. In the same area lies the fort of Jaynagar near Lakhīsarai which seems to have been the headquarters of the Pāla king Indradyumna². Not far away was the fort of Surajgarhā, which has been washed away by the Gaṅgā, but the suburbs still show Pāla antiquities³. In the Jamui Subdivision is situated the fort of Indpe where the walls of the fortress and the ditch enclosing it are still intact. Tradition associates it with Indradyumna⁴. North of the Gaṅgā in Monghyr were situated fortresses in Naulāgarh, Jaymanglāgarh and Alauligarh.

Several fortresses of the Pāla period are found in the Bhagalpur District. The westernmost fortress was

1 Although each one of the early mediaeval dynasties has been made the subject of a doctoral thesis, not a single thesis enumerates fortified settlements associated with a dynasty.

2 *ARB*, no. 210.

3 *Ibid.*, no. 427.

4 *Ibid.*, no. 190.

situated in Sultānganj, where numerous Buddhist images of the Pāla period have been discovered. The easternmost fortress was situated at Antichak near Colgong. Three seals of Vaṭaparvataka, mentioned as a victory camp in Pāla grants and hitherto indentified with Vatesarthāna near Colgong, have been discovered in recent excavations at Antichak, at a distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile from Vatesarathāna. Since the fortified wall of Antichak can be traced to a distance of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, it would appear that the *skandhāvāra* of Vaṭaparvataka was a fortified place covering the present area of Antichak. Further, since the seal of a *rāṇaka* (*rāṇaka śrīdevasya*) has been found at this place¹, it would appear that the fortress was in charge of some feudal lord. Near the same place seems to have been situated the hill fort of Patharghaṭā, associated with many Pāla antiquities². A similar settlement was the fort of Shāhkuṇḍ on a hill top which seems to have been a Pāla site. In the suburbs of the present town of Bhagalpur lay the fort of Champānagar, which, as seen by Buchanan, had a square rampart surrounded by a ditch, probably as old as the Pāla period³.

The Gaya District contains survivals of at least five Pāla fortresses. Thus Amaunā near Daudnagar, which has given us an inscription of the mid-sixth century A.D.⁴, contains a mud-fort, probably of the Pāla period. Kurkihār, which contains ruins of a brick-built fort and has yielded a large number of Pāla antiquities⁵, especially the bronzes housed in Patna Museum, was apparently a fortress of considerable importance in Pāla

1 I owe all this information to Dr. R. C. P. Singh, Field Director, Department of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology, Patna University.

2 *ARB*, no. 303.

3 *Ibid.*, no. 100.

4 *Ibid.*, no. 12.

5 *Ibid.*, no. 262.

times. Mention may be made of three other fortresses of the District: Dharawat where numerous Buddhist images are found¹, Keur, and Aphsad where the Stone Inscription of Ādityasena was found².

More Pāla forts are found in the Patna District. We may begin with Pāṭaliputra, a victory camp of the Pālas. It seems that Patna, which continued as a walled town up to Muslim times, was a fortified place under the Pālas³.

In contrast to the nine victory camps of the Pālas we hear of as many as twenty-one victory camps or royal encampments of the Candellas,⁴ which may have been so many fortresses; at least this is clear in the case of seven camps, Kharjūravāhaka, Vāridurga, Jayapura or Nandipura (Ajayagaḍh), Kīrttigiridurga (Deogaḍh), Gopagiri (Gwalior), Kālāñjara and Sondhi (Seondha fort, now Kanhargarh).⁵ Besides these, eight other forts, including two or three in this list, are ascribed to the Candellas by tradition.⁶ Therefore in all the Candella fortresses probably counted about two dozen. Most fortresses lay in the Bundelkhand region, which accounted for the major part of the Candella kingdom. Since the Candella principality was hardly larger than a modern division (its original name being Jejākabhukti and *bhukti* being equal to a division) and since it did not contain more than sixteen *viṣayas* or *pattalās*,⁷ the number of fortresses would appear to be considerable.

1 Ibid., no. 140.

2 CII, iii, 200-1.

3 ARB, no. 350 (iii).

4 S. K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajurāha*, pp. 163-4.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., pp. 6-8.

7 S. K. Mitra, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-3, considers *viṣaya* to be identical with *pattalā* and enumerates sixteen *viṣayas* on the basis of the Candella inscriptions.



Evidently the Candella fortresses were not autonomous feudal castles in possession of local chiefs but military centres for realising revenues from local peasants and keeping them down. It seems that every fort was placed under the charge of a governor called *durgādhipa*,¹ and the office held by him was known as *durgādhikāra*.² Commanders of important forts such as Kālañjara and Ajayagaḍh held the title of *viśiṣa*, and were granted at least one village each for their services.³ Probably in the last days of the Candella rule they flourished as full-fledged feudal lords. During the 12th century the garrisons or castle-guard of English royal castles were provided by groups of baronies assigned for the purpose.⁴ Under the Candellas, however, the commander of royal forts was paid by land grants, but it was not his responsibility to recruit and furnish the castle-guard which was probably formed by soldiers maintained at royal cost. At any rate the existence of so many fortresses in the Candella dominion may be taken as important evidence of feudal organisation.

No definite pattern can emerge from a fragmentary study of fortresses under the Pālas and Candellas. Only a region-wise survey of the forts associated with the various dynasties can enable us to gauge in concrete terms the full importance of the role of these strongholds in pre-Muslim mediaeval times. Nevertheless, the utility of fortresses in mediaeval political and economic organisation cannot be denied. The mediaeval fort was a multipurpose institution. Catering to the needs of the adjacent countryside, in some ways it served the same purpose as modern towns. It was the place where the taxes realised in kind could be stored, garrisons of

1 Ibid., p. 160.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., pp. 158-9.

4 Frank Stenton, *English Feudalism 1066-1166*, pp. 212-3.



soldiers could be maintained, and the neighbouring people could seek shelter in times of war, flood (especially in Eastern India) and famine, and above all it was the final instrument through which the prince or the chief could perpetuate his power over the peasantry.

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